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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



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### AINSLEE'S

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CHAPTER I.



HE supper room of the Savoy Hotel was all brightness and glitter and gayety. But Sir James Willoughby Pitt, baronet, of the United Kingdom, looked round about him through

the smoke of his cigarette, and felt moodily that this was a flat world, despite the geographers, and that he was very much alone in it.

He felt old

If it is ever allowable for a young man of twenty-six to give himself up to melancholy reflections, Jimmy Pitt might have been excused for doing so, at that moment. Nine years ago he had dropped out, or, to put it more exactly, had been kicked out, and had ceased to belong to London. And now he had returned to find himself in a strange city.

Jimmy Pitt's complete history would take long to write, for he had contrived to crowd much into those nine years. Abridged, it may be told as follows: There were two brothers, a good brother and a bad brother. Sir Eustace Pitt, the latter, married money. John, his younger brother, remained a bachelor. It may be mentioned, to check needless

sympathy, that there was no rivalry between the two. John Pitt had not the slightest desire to marry the lady of his brother's choice, or any other lady. He was a self-sufficing man who from an early age showed signs of becoming some day a financial magnate.

Matters went on much the same after the marriage. John continued to go to the city, Eustace to the dogs. Neither brother had any money of his own, the fortune of the Pitts having been squandered to the ultimate farthing by the sportive gentleman who had held the title in the days of the regency, when White's and the Cocoa Tree were in their prime, and fortunes had a habit of disappearing in a single evening. Four years after the marriage, Lady Pitt died, and the widower, having spent three years and a half at. Monte Carlo, working out an infallible system for breaking the bank, to the great contentment of Mons. Blanc and the management in general, proceeded to the gardens, where he shot himself in the orthodox manner, leaving many liabilities, few assets, and one son.

The good brother, by this time a man of substance in Lombard Street, adopted the youthful successor to the title, and sent him to a series of schools, beginning with a kindergarten and ending with Eton.

Unfortunately Eton demanded from

Jimmy a higher standard of conduct than he was prepared to supply, and a week after his seventeenth birthday, his career as an Etonian closed prematurely. John Pitt thereupon delivered an ultimatum. Jimmy could choose between the smallest of small posts in his uncle's business, and one hundred pounds in banknotes, coupled with the usual handwashing and disowning. Jimmy would not have been his father's son if he had not dropped at the money. The world seemed full to him of possibilities for a young man of parts with a hundred pounds in his pocket.

He left for Liverpool that day, and for New York on the morrow.

For the next nine years he is off the stage, which is occupied by his Uncle John, proceeding from strength to strength, now head partner, next chairman of the company into which the business had been converted, and finally a member of Parliament, silent as a wax figure, but a great comfort to the party by virtue of liberal contributions to its funds.

It may be thought curious that he should make Jimmy his heir after what had happened; but it is possible that time had softened his resentment. Or he may have had a dislike for public charities, the only other claumant for his wealth. At any rate, it came about that Jimmy, reading in a Chicago paper that if Sir James Willoughby Pitt, baronet, would call upon Messrs. Snell, Hazlewood, and Delane, solicitors, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, he would hear of something to his advantage, had called and heard something very much to his advantage.

Wherefore we find him, on this night of July, supping in lonely magnificence at the Savoy, and feeling at the moment far less conscious of the magnificence

than of the loneliness.

Watching the crowd with a jaundiced eye, Jimmy had found his attention attracted chiefly by a party of three a few tables away. The party consisted of a pretty girl, a lady of middle age and stately demeanor, plainly her mother, and a light-haired, weedy young man of about twenty. It had

been the almost incessant prattle of this youth and the peculiarly high-pitched, gurgling laugh which shot from him at short intervals which had drawn Jimmy's notice upon them. And it was the curious cessation of both prattle and laugh which now made him look again in their direction.

The young man faced Jimmy; and Jimmy, looking at him, could see that all was not well with him. He was pale. He talked at random. A slight perspiration was noticeable on his fore-

head.

Jimmy caught his eye. There was a

hunted look in it.

Given the time and the place, there were only two things which could have caused that look. Either the light-haired young man had seen a ghost, ohe had suddenly realized that he had not enough money to pay the check.

Jimmy's heart went out to the sufferer. He took a card from his case, scribbled the words, "Can I help?" on it, and gave it to a waiter to take to the young man, who was now in a state

bordering on collapse.

The next moment the light-haired one was at his table, talking in a tever-

ish whisper.

"I say." he said, "it's frightfully good of you, old chap. It's frightfully awkward. I've come out with too little money. I hardly like to— What I mean to say is, you've never seen me before, and—"

"That's all right," said Jimmy. "Only too glad to help. It might have happened to any one. Will this be

enough?"

He placed a five-pound note on the table. The young man grabbed at it

with a rush of thanks,

"I say, thanks fearfully," he said. "I don't know what I'd have done. I'll let you have it back to-morrow. Here's my card. Blunt's my name. Spennie Blunt. Is your address on your card? I can't remember. Oh, by Jove, I've got it in my hand all the time." The gurgling laugh came into action again, freshened and strengthened by its rest. "Savoy Mansions, eh? I'll come round to-morrow. Thanks, frightfully, again,

old chap. I don't know what I should have done."

He flitted back to his table, bearing the spoil, and Jimmy, having finished his cigarette, paid his check, and got up to go.

It was a perfect summer night. He looked at his watch. There was time for a stroll on the Embankment before

bed.

He was leaning on the balustrade, looking across the river at the vague, mysterious mass of buildings on the Surrey side, when a voice broke in on his thoughts.

"Say, boss. Excuse me."

Jimmy spun round. A ragged man with a crop of fiery red hair was standing at his side. The light was dim, but Jimmy recognized that hair.

"Spike!" he cried.

The other gaped, then grinned a vast grin of recognition.

"Mr. Chames! Gee, dis cops de

limit!"

Three years had passed since Jimmy had parted from Spike Mullins, Red Spike to the New York police, but time had not touched him. To Jimmy he looked precisely the same as in the old New York days.

A policeman sauntered past, and glanced curiously at them. He made as if to stop, then walked on. A few yards away he halted. Jimmy could see him watching covertly. He realized that this was not the place for a prolonged con-

versation.
"Spike," he said, "do you know Sa-

voy Mansions?" "Sure. Foist to de left across de

way."

"Come on there. I'll meet you at the door. We can't talk here. That cop's

got his eye on us."

He walked away. As he went, he smiled. The policeman's inspection had made him suddenly alert and on his guard. Yet why? What did it matter to Sir James Pit baronet, if the whole police force of London stopped and looked at him?

"Queer thing, habit," he said, as he made his way across the road.

#### CHAPTER II.

A black figure detached itself from the blacker shadows, and shuffled stealthily to where Jimmy stood on the doorstep.

"That you, Spike?" asked Jimmy, in

a low voice.

"Dat's right, Mr. Chames,"

"Come on in."

He led the way up to his rooms, switched on the electric light, and shut the door. Spike stood blinking at the sudden glare. He twirled his battered hat in his hands. His red hair shone fiercely.

Jimmy inspected him out of the corner of his eye, and came to the conclusion that the Mullins' finances must be at a low ebb. Spike's costume differed in several important details from that of the ordinary well-groomed man about town. There was nothing of the flaneur about the Bowery boy. His hat was of the soft black felt, fashionable on the East Side of New York. It was in poor condition, and looked as if it had been up too late the night before. A black tail coat, burst at the elbows, stained with mud, was tightly buttoned across his chest. This evidently with the idea of concealing the fact that he wore no shirt—an attempt which was not wholly successful. A pair of gray flannel trousers and boots out of which two toes peeped coyly, completed the picture.

Even Spike himself seemed to be aware that there were points in his appearance which would have distressed the editor of a men's fashion paper.

"'Scuse dese duds," he said. man's bin an' mislaid de trunk wit' me best suit in. Dis is me number two."

"Don't mention it, Spike," said Jimmy. "You look like a matinée idol. Have a drink?"

Spike's eye gleamed as he reached for the decanter. He took a seat. "Cigar, Spike?"

"Sure. T'anks, Mr. Chames."

Jimmy lit his pipe. Spike, after a few genteel sips, threw off his restraint and finished the rest of his glass at a "Try another," suggested Jimmy. Spike's grin showed that the idea had

been well received.

Jimmy sat and smoked in silence for a while. He was thinking the thing over. He had met Spike Mullins for the first time in rather curious circumstances in New York, and for four years the other had followed him with a fidelity which no dangers or hardships could affect. Whatever "Mr. Chames" did. said, or thought was to Spike the best possible act, speech, or reflection of which man was capable. For four years their partnership had continued, and then, conducting a little adventure on his own account in Jimmy's absence, Spike had met with one of those accidents which may happen to any one. The police had gathered him in, and he had passed out of Jimmy's life.

What was puzzling Jimmy was the problem of what to do with him now that he had reëntered it. Mr. Chames was one man. Sir lames Willoughby Pitt, baronet, another. On the other hand. Spike was plainly in low water, and must be lent a helping hand,

Spike was looking at him over his glass with respectful admiration. Jim-

my caught his eye, and spoke.
"Well, Spike," he said. "Curious, us

meeting like this."

"De limit," agreed Spike.

"I can't imagine you three thousand miles away from New York. How do you know the cars still run both ways on Broadway?"

A wistful look came into Spike's eye. "I t'ought it was time I give old Lunnon a call. De cops seemed like as if they didn't have no use for me in New York. Dey don't give de glad smile to a boy out of prison."

"Poor old Spike," said Jimmy, "you've had bad luck, haven't you?"

"Fierce," agreed the other.

"But whatever induced you to try for that safe without me? They were bound to get you. You should have waited.'

"Dat's right, boss, if I never says anudder word. I was a farmer for fair at de game wit'out vouse. But I t'ought I'd try to do somet'ing so dat

I'd have somet'ing to show youse when you come back. So I says here's dis safe and here's me, and I'll get busy wit' it, and den Mr. Chames will be pleased for fair when he gets back. So I has a try, and dey gets me while I'm at it. We'll cut out dat part."

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"Well, it's over now, at any rate. What have you been doing since you

came to England?"

"Gettin' moved on by de cops, most-

An' sleepin' in de park."

"Well, you needn't sleep in the park any more, Spike. You can pitch your moving tent with me. And you'll want some clothes. We'll get those to-morrow. You're the sort of figure they can fit off the peg. You're not too tall, which is a good thing."

"Bad t'ing for me, Mr. Chames. If I'd bin taller I'd have stood for being a New York cop, and oin buying a brownstone house on Fifth Avenue by this. It's de cops makes de big money in old Manhattan, dat's who it is."

"You're right there," said Jimmy. "At least, partly. I suppose half the New York force does get rich by graft. There are honest men among them, but we didn't happen to meet them."

"That's right, we didn't. Dere was old man McEachern."

"McEachern! Yes. If any of them got rich, he would be the man. He was the worst grafter of the entire bunch. I could tell you some stories about old Pat McEachern, Spike. If half those yarns were true he must be a wealthy man by now. We shall hear of him running for mayor one of these days."

"Say, Mr. Chames, wasn't youse

struck on de goil?"
"What girl?" said Jimmy quietly. "Old man McEachern's goil, Molly. Dey used to say dat youse was her steady."

"If you don't mind, Spike, friend of my youth, we'll cut out that," said Jim-"When I want my affairs discussed I'll mention it. Till then-See?

"Sure," said Spike, who saw nothing beyond the fact, dimly realized, that he had said something which had been bet-

ter left unsaid.

Jimmy chewed the stem of his pipe savagely. Spike's words seemed to have touched a spring and let loose feelings which he had kept down for three years. Molly McEachern! So "they" used to say that he was engaged to Molly. He cursed Spike Mullins in his heart, wellmeaning, blundering Spike, who was now sitting on the edge of his chair drawing sorrowfully at his cigar and wondering what he had done to give offense. The years fell away from Jimmy, and he was back in New York, standing at the corner of Forty-second Street with half an hour to wait because the fear of missing her had sent him there too early; sitting in Central Park with her while the squirrels came down and begged for nuts; walking— Damn Spike! They had been friends. Nothing more. He had never said a word. Her father had warned her against him. Old Pat McEachern knew how he got his living, and could have put his hand on the author of half a dozen burglaries by which the police had been officially "baffled." That had been his strong point. He had never left tracks. There was never any evidence. But McEachern knew, and he had intervened stormily when he came upon them together. And Molly had stood up for him, till her father had apologized confusedly, raging inwardly the while at his helplessness. It was after that-

"Mr. Chames," said Spike. Jimmy's wits returned. "Hullo?" he said.

"Mr. Chames, what's doing here? Put me next to de game. Is it de old lay? You'll want me wit' youse, I guess?"

Jimmy laughed, and shut the door on

"I'd quite forgotten I hadn't told you about myself, Spike. Do you know what a baronet is?"

"Search me. What's de answer?" "A baronet's the noblest work of man, Spike. I am one. Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning-or is it art and learning?-die, but leave us still our old nobility. I'm a big man now, Spike, I can tell you."

"Gee!"

"My position has also the advantage of carrying a good deal of money with

"Plunks!"

"You have grasped it. Plunks. Dollars. Doubloons. I line up with the thickwads now, Spike. I don't have to work to turn a dishonest penny any longer.

The horrid truth sank slowly into the other's mind.

"Say! What, Mr. Chames? Youse don't need to go on de old lay no more? You're cutting it out for fair?"

"That's the idea."

Spike gasped. His world was falling about his ears. Now that he had met Mr. Chames again he had looked forward to a long and prosperous partnership in crime, with always the master mind behind him to direct his movements and check him if he went wrong. He had looked out upon the richness of London, and he had said with Blücher: "What a city to loot!"

And here was his leader shattering

his visions with a word.

"Have another drink, Spike," said the "It's a lost leader sympathetically. shock to you, I guess."

"I t'ought, Mr. Chames-

"I know you did, and I'm very sorry for you. But it can't be helped. Noblesse oblige, Spike. We of the old aristocracy mustn't do these things. We should get ourselves talked about."

Spike sat silent, with a long face. Jimmy slapped him on the shoulder.

"After all," he said, "living honestly may be the limit, for all we know. Numbers of people do it, I've heard, and enjoy themselves tremendously. We must give it a trial, Spike. We'll go out to-gether and see life. Pull yourself together and be cheerful, Spike."

After a moment's reflection the other

grinned, howbeit faintly.

"That's right," said Jimmy Pitt. "You'll be the greatest success ever in society. All you have to do is to brush your hair, look cheerful, and keep your hands off the spoons. For in society, Spike, they invariably count them after the departure of the last guest."

"Sure," said Spike, as one who thoroughly understood this sensible precaution.

"And now," said Jimmy, "we'll be turning in. Can you manage sleeping

on the sofa for one night?"

"Gee, I've bin sleepin' on de Embankment all de last week. Dis is to de good, Mister Chames."

#### CHAPTER III.

In the days before the Welshman began to expend his surplus energy in playing football, he was accustomed, whenever the monotony of his everyday life began to oppress him, to collect a few friends and make raids across the border into England, to the huge discomfort of the dwellers on the other side. It was to cope with this habit that Corven Abbey, in Shropshire, came into existence. It met a long-felt want. Ministering to the spiritual needs of the neighborhood in times of peace, it became a haven of refuge when trouble began. From all sides people poured into it, emerging cautiously when the marauders had disappeared.

In the whole history of the abbey there is but one instance recorded of a bandit attempting to take the place by storm, and the attack was an emphatic failure. On receipt of one ladle full of molten lead, aimed to a nicety by John the Novice, who seems to have been anything but a novice at marksmanship, this warrior retired, done to a turn, to his mountain fastnesses, and is never heard of again. He would seem, however, to have passed the word round among his friends, for subsequent raiding parties studiously avoided the abbey, and a peasant who had succeeded in crossing its threshold was for the future considered to be "home" and out of the game. Corven Abbey, as a result, grew in power and popularity. Abbot succeeded abbot, the lake at the foot of the hill was restocked at intervals, the lichen grew on the walls; and still the abbey endured.

But time, assisted by his majesty, King Henry the Eighth, had done its work. The monks had fled. The walls had crumbled, and in the twentieth century, the abbey was a modern country house, and the owner a rich American. le

Of this gentleman the world knew but little. That he had made money, and a good deal of it, was certain. His name, Patrick McEachern, suggested Irish parentage, and a slight brogue, noticeable, however, only in moments of excitement, supported this theory. He had arrived in London some four years back, taken rooms at the Albany,

and gone into society.

England still firmly believes that wealth accrues to every resident of New York by some mysterious process not understandable of the Briton. McEachern and his money were accepted by society without question. His solecisms, which at first were numerous, were passed over as so quaint and refreshing. People liked his rugged good humor. He speedily made friends, among them Lady Jane Blunt, the still youthful widow of a man about town, who, after trying for several years to live at the rate of ten thousand per annum with an income of two and a half, had finally given up the struggle and drank himself peacefully into the tomb, leaving her in sole charge of their one son, Spencer Archbald.

Possibly because he was the exact antithesis of the late lamented, Lady Jane found herself drawn to Mr. Mc-Eachern. Whatever his faults, he had strength; and after her experience of married life with a weak man, Lady Jane had come to the conclusion that strength was the only male quality worth consideration. When a year later, McEachern's daughter, Molly, had come over, it was Lady Jane who took her under her wing and intro-

duced her everywhere.

In the fifth month of the second year of their acquaintance, Mr. McEachern proposed and was accepted. "The bridegroom," said a society paper, "is one of those typical captains of industry of whom our cousins 'across the streak' can boast so many. Tall, muscular, square-shouldered, with the bulldog jaw and twinkling gray eye of the born

leader. You look at him and turn away satisfied. You have seen a man!"

Lady Jane, who had fallen in love with the abbey some years before, during a visit to the neighborhood, had prevailed upon her square-shouldered lord to turn his twinkling gray eye in that direction, and the captain of industry, with the remark that here, at last, was a real bully old sure-fire English stately home, had sent down builders and their like, not in single spies, but in battalions, with instructions to

get busy.

The results were excellent. A happy combination of deep purse on the part of the employer and excellent taste on the part of the architect had led to the erection of one of the handsomest buildings in Shropshire. To stand on the hill at the back of the house was to see a view worth remembering. The lower portion of the hill, between the house and the lake, had been cut into broad terraces. The lake itself, with its island with the little boathouse in the centre, was a glimpse of fairyland. Mr. McEachern was not poetical, but he had secured as his private sanctum a room which commanded this view.

He was sitting in this room one evening, about a week after the meeting between Spennie and Jimmy Pitt at the

Savoy.

"See here, Jane," he was saying, "this is my point. I've been fixing up things in my mind, and this is the way I make it out. I reckon there's no sense in taking risks when you needn't. You've a mighty high-toned bunch of guests here. I'm not saying you haven't. What I say is, it would make us all feel more comfortable if we knew there was a detective in the house keeping his eye skinned. I'm not alluding to any of them in particular, but how are we to know that all these social headliners are on the level?"

"If you mean our guests, Pat, I can assure you that they are all perfectly

honest."

Lady Jane looked out of the window, as she spoke, at a group of those under discussion. Certainly at the moment the sternest censor could have found nothing to cavil at in their movements. Some were playing tennis, some clock golf, and the rest were smoking. She had frequently complained, in her gentle, languid way, of her husband's unhappily suspicious nature. She could never understand it. For her part she suspected no one. She liked and trusted everybody, which was the reason why she was so popular, and so often taken in,

Mr. McEachern looked bovine, as was his habit when he was endeavoring to gain a point against opposition.

"They may be on the level," he said.
"I'm not saying anything against any one. But I've seen a lot of crooks in my time, and it's not the ones with the low brows and the cauliflower ears that you want to watch for. It's the innocent Willies who look as if all they could do was to lead the cotillon and wear bangles on their ankles. I've had a lot to do with them, and it's up to a man that don't want to be stung not to go by what a fellow looks like."

"Really, Pat, dear, I sometimes think you ought to have been a policeman.

What is the matter?"

"Matter?"

"You shouted."

"Shouted? Not me. Spark from my cigar fell on my hand."

"You know, you smoke too much, Pat," said his wife, seizing the opening with the instinct which makes an Irishman at a fair hit every head he

"I'm all right, me dear. Faith, I c'u'd smoke wan hondred a day and no harm

done.'

By way of proving the assertion he puffed out with increased vigor at his cigar. The pause gave him time to think of another argument, which might otherwise have escaped him.

"When we were married, me dear Jane," he said, "there was a detective in the room to watch the presents. Two of them. I remimber seeing them at once. There go two of the boys, I said to mysilf. I mean," he added hastily, "two of the police force."

"But detectives at wedding receptions are quite ordinary. Nobody minds

them. You see, the presents are so valuable that it would be silly to risk losing them.'

"And are there not valuable things here," asked McEachern triumphantly, "which it would be silly to risk losing? And Sir Thomas is coming to-day with his wife. And you know what a deal

of jewelry she always takes about her."
"Oh, Julia!" said Lady Jane, a little disdainfully. Her late husband's brother Thomas' wife was one of the few people to whom she objected. And, indeed, she was not alone in this prejudice. Few who had much to do with her did like Lady Blunt.

"That rope of pearls of hers," said Mr. McEachern, "cost forty thousand

pounds, no less, so they say.

"So she says. But if you were thinking of bringing down a detective to watch over Julia's necklace, Pat, you needn't trouble. I believe she takes one about with her wherever she goes, disguised as Thomas' valet.

"Still, me dear-

"Pat, you're absurd," laughed Lady ne. "I won't have you littering up the house with great, clumsy detectives. You must remember that you aren't in horrid New York now, where everybody you meet wants to rob you. Who is it that you suspect? Who is thewhat is the word you're so fond of? Crook. That's it. Who is the crook?"

"I don't want to mention names, said McEachern cautiously, "and I cast no suspicions, but who is that pale, thin Willie who came yesterday? The one that says the clever things that nobody

understands?"

"Lulu Wesson! Why, Patrick! He's the most delightful boy. What can you

suspect him of?"

"I don't suspect him of anything. But you'll remimber what I was telling about the sort of boy you want to watch. That's what that boy is. He may be the straightest ever, but if I was told there was a crook in the company, and wasn't put next who it was, he's the boy that would get my vote."

"What dreadful nonsense you are talking, Pat. I believe you suspect every one you meet. I suppose you will jump to the conclusion that this man whom Spennie is bringing down with

him to-day is a criminal of some sort."
"How's that? Spennie bringing a

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There was not a great deal of enthusiasm in McEachern's voice. His stepson was not a young man whom he respected very highly. Spennie regarded his stepfather with nervous apprehension, as one who would deal with his shortcomings with a vigor and severity of which his mother was incapable. The change of treatment which had begun after her marriage with the American had had an excellent effect upon him, but it had not been pleasant. As Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have said of his vegetarian diet, it may have been wholesome, but it was not good. McEachern, for his part, regarded Spennie as a boy who would get into mischief unless he had an eye fixed upon him. So he proceeded to fix that

"Yes, I must be seeing Harding about getting the rooms ready. Spennie's friend is bringing his man with him."

"Who is his friend?"

"He doesn't say. He just says he's a man he met in London."

"And what does that grunt mean, I should like to know? I believe you've begun to suspect the poor man already, without seeing him."
"I don't say I have. But a man can

pick up strange people in London.

"Pat, you're perfectly awful. I believe you suspect every one you meet. What do you suspect me of, I wonder?" "That's easy answered," said Mc-Eachern. "Robbery from the person."

"What have I stolen?"

"Me heart, me dear," replied Mc-Eachern gallantly, with a vast grin.

"After that," said his wife, "I think I had better go. I had no idea you could make such pretty speeches. Pat!"
"Well, me dear?"

"Don't send for that detective. really wouldn't do. If it got about that we couldn't trust our guests, we should never live it down. You won't, will "Very well, me dear."

What followed may afford some slight clue to the secret of Mr. Patrick McEachern's rise in the world. It certainly suggests singleness of purpose, which is one of the essentials of success.

No sooner had the door closed behind Lady Jane than he went to his writing table, took pen and paper, and wrote the

following letter:

To the Manager, Wragge's Detective Agency,

Holborn Bars, London, E. C. IR: With refee to my last of the 28th ult., I should be glad if you would send down immediately one of your best men. Am making arrangements to receive him. Shall be glad if you will instruct him as follows, viz. (a) that he shall stay at the village inn in character of American seeing sights of England and anxious to inspect the abbey; (b) that he shall call and ask to see me. I shall then recognize him as old New York friend, and move his baggage from above inn to the abbey. Yours faithfully,

P. McEachern. P. S.-Kindly not send a rube, but a real smart man.

This brief but pregnant letter cost him some pains in its composition. He was not a ready writer. But he completed it at last to his satisfaction. There was a crisp purity in the style which pleased him. He read it over, and put in a couple of commas. Then he placed it in an envelope, and lit another cigar.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Jimmy's acquaintance with Spennie Blunt had developed rapidly in the few days following their first meeting. Spennie had called next morning to repay the loan, and two days later had invited Jimmy to come down to Shropshire with him. Which invitation, Jimmy, bored with London, had readily accepted. Spike he had decided to take with him in the rôle of valet. The Bowery boy was probably less fitted for the post than any one has ever been since the world began; but it would not do to leave him at Savoy Mansions.

It had been arranged that they should meet Spennie at Paddington station, Accompanied by Spike, who came within an ace of looking almost respectable in new blue serge, Jimmy arrived at Paddington with a quarter of an hour to spare. Nearly all London seemed to be at the station, with the exception of Spennie. Of that light-haired and hearted youth there were no signs. But just as the train was about to start, the missing one came skimming down the platform and hurled himself in. For the first ten minutes he sat panting. At the conclusion of that period, he spoke.
"Dash it!" he said. "I've suddenly

remembered I never telegraphed home to let 'em know what train we were coming by. Now what'll happen is that there won't be anything at Corven to meet us and take us up to the abbey. And you can't get a cab. They don't

grow such things.

"How far is it to walk?" "Five solid miles. And uphill most

of the way. And I've got a bad foot!" "As a matter of fact," said Jimmy, "it's just possible that we shall be met, after all. While I was waiting for you at Paddington I heard a man asking if he had to change for Corven. He may be going to the abbey, too."

"What sort of a looking man?" "Tell. Thin. Rather a wreck."

"Probably my Uncle Frightful man. Always trying to roast a chap, don't you know. Still, there's one consolation. If it is Uncle Thomas, they'll have sent the automobile for him. I shouldn't think he'd ever walked more than a hundred yards in his natural, not at a stretch. He generally stays with us in the summer. I wonder if he's bringing Aunt Julia with him. You didn't see her, I suppose, by any chance? Tall, and talks to beat the band. He married her for her money," concluded Spennie charitably.

"Isn't she attractive, either?

"Aunt Julia," said Spennie with feeling, "is the absolute limit. Wait till you see her. Sort of woman who makes you feel that your hands are the color of a frightful tomato and the size of a billiard table, if you know what I mean. By gad, though, you should see her jewels. It's perfectly beastly the way that woman crams them on. She's got

one rope of pearls which is supposed to have cost forty thousand pourds. Look out for it to-night at dinner. It's worth

Jimmy Pitt was distressed to feel distinct symptoms of a revival of the Old Adam as he listened to these alluring details. It was trying a reformed man a little high, he could not help thinking with some indignation, to dangle forty thousand pounds' worth of pearls before his eyes over the freshly turned sods of the grave of his past. It was the sort of test which might have shaken the resolution of the oldest established brand from the burning.

He could not keep his mind from dwelling on the subject. Even the fact that-commercially-there was no need for him to think of such things could not restrain him. He was rich now, and could afford to be honest. He tried to keep that fact steadily before him, but instinct was too powerful. His opera-tions in the old days had never been conducted purely with an eye to financial profit. He had collected gems almost as much for what they were as for what they could bring. Many a time had the faithful Spike bewailed the flaw in an otherwise admirable character, which had induced his leader to keep a portion of the spoil instead of converting it at once into good dollar bills. It had had to go sooner or later, but Jimmy had always clung to it as long as possible. To Spike a diamond brooch of cunning workmanship was merely the equivalent of so many "plunks." That a man, otherwise more than sane, should value a jewel for its own sake was to him an inexplicable thing.

Jimmy was still deep in thought when the train, which had been taking itself less seriously for the last half hour, stopping at stations of quite minor importance and generally showing a tendency to dawdle, halted again. A board with the legend "Corven" in large letters showed that they had reached their

destination.

"Here we are," said Spennie. "Hop out. Now what's the betting that there isn't room for all of us in the bubble?"

From farther down the train a lady and gentleman emerged.

"That's the man. Is that your uncle?"

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said Jimmy,

"Guilty," said Spennie gloomily. "I suppose we'd better go and tackle them. Come on."

They walked up the platform to where Sir Thomas stood smoking a meditative cigar and watching in a dispassionate way the efforts of his wife to bully the solitary porter attached to the station into a frenzy. Sir Thomas was a very tall, very thin man, with cold eyes, and tight, thin lips. His clothes fitted him in the way clothes do fit one man in a thousand. They were the best part of him. His general appearance gave one the idea that his meals did him little good, and his meditations rather less. His conversation—of which there was not a great deal-was designed for the most part to sting. Many years' patient and painstaking sowing of his wild oats had left him at fifty-six with few pleasures; but among those that remained he ranked high the discomfiting of his neighbors.

"This is my friend Pitt, uncle," said Spennie, presenting Jimmy with a mo-

tion of the hand.

Sir Thomas extended three fingers. Jimmy extended two, and the handshake was not a success.

At this point in the interview, Spike came up, chuckling amiably, with a magazine in his hand.

"P'Chee!" said Spike. "Say, Mr. Chames, de mug what wrote dis piece must ha' bin livin' out in de woods for fair. His stunt ain't writin', sure. Say, dere's a gazebo what wants to get busy wit' de heroine's jools what's locked in de drawer in de dressin' room. So dis mug, what do youse t'ink he does?

"Another friend of yours, Spennie?" inquired Sir Thomas politely, eving the red-haired speaker with interest,

"It's

He looked appealingly at Jimmy.

"It's only my man," said Jimmy. "Spike," he added in an undertone, "to the woods. Chase yourself. It's not up to you to do stunts on this beat. Fade

away."

"Sure," said the abashed Spike, restored to a sense of his position. "Dat's right. I've got wheels in me coco, that's what I've got, comin' buttin' in here. Sorry, Mr. Chames. Sorry, gents. Me for the tall grass."

He trotted away.

"Your man seems to have a pretty taste in literature," said Sir Thomas to Jimmy. "Well, my dear, finished your chat with the porter?"

Lady Blunt had come up, flushed and triumphant, having left the solitary por-

ter a demoralized wreck.

"I'm through," she announced crisply. "Well, Spencer? How are you? Who's this? Don't stand gaping, child. Who's your friend?"

Spennie explained with some incoherence that his name was Pitt. His uncle had shaken him; the arrival of his aunt seemed to unnerve him com-

pletely.

"Pleased to meet you," snapped Lady Blunt. "Spencer, where are your trunks? Left them behind, I suppose? No? Well, that's a surprise. Tell that porter to look after them. If you have any trouble with him, mention it to me. I'll make him jump around. Where's the automobile? Outside? Where? Take me to it.'

Lady Blunt, when conversing, resembled a Maxim gun more than anything

else in the world.

"I'm afraid," said Spennie in an abject manner, as they left the station, "that it will be rather a bit of a frightful squash-what I mean to say is, I hardly think we shall all find room in the auto. I see they have only sent the small one."

Lady Blunt stopped short, and fixed

him with a glittering eye.

"I know what it is, Spencer," she said. "You never telegraphed to your mother to tell her what time you were going to arrive."

Spennie opened his mouth feebly, but, apparently changing his mind,

made no reply.

"My dear," said Sir Thomas smooth-

ly, "we must not expect too much of Spennie."

"Pshaw!" This was a single shot from the Maxim.

The baited youth looked vainly for assistance to Jimmy.

"But — er — aunt," said Spennie. "Really, I—er—I only just caught the train. Didn't I, Pitt?"

"What? Oh, yes. Got in just as it was moving."

"That was it. I really hadn't time to telegraph. Had I, Pitt?"

"Not a minute."

"And how was it you were so late?" Spennie plunged into an explana-tion, feeling all the time that he was making things worse for himself. Nobody is at his best in the matter of explanations if a lady whom he knows to be possessed of a firm belief in the incurable weakness of his intellect is looking fixedly at him during the recital. A prolonged conversation with Lady Blunt always made him feel exactly as if he were being tied into knots.

"All this," said Sir Thomas, as his nephew paused for breath, "is very, very characteristic of our dear Spen-

nie.

Our dear Spennie broke into a perspiration.

"However," continued Sir Thomas, "there's room for either you or-"Pitt," said Jimmy. "P-i double t."

Sir Thomas bowed.

"In front with the chauffeur, if you

care to take the seat."
"I'll walk," said Jimmy. "I'd rath-

"Frightfully good of you, old chap," whispered Spennie. "Sure you don't mind? I do hate walking, and my foot's hurting fearfully."

"Which is my way?"

"Straight as you can go. You go

"Spennie," said Sir Thomas suavely, "your aunt expresses a wish to arrive at the abbey in time for dinner. If you could manage to come to some arrangement about that seat-"

Spennie climbed hurriedly into the automobile. The last Jimmy saw of him was a hasty vision of him being prodded in the ribs by Lady Blunt's parasol, while its owner said something to him which, judging by his attitude,

was not pleasant.

He watched them out of sight, and started to follow at a leisurely pace. It certainly was an ideal afternoon for a country walk. The sun was just hesitating whether to treat the time as afternoon or evening. Eventually it decided that it was evening, and moderated its beams. After London, the country was deliciously fresh and cool. Jimmy felt, as the scent of the hedges came to him, that the only thing worth doing in the world was to settle down somewhere with three acres and a cow, and become pastoral.

There was a marked lack of traffic on the road. Once he met a cart, and once a flock of sheep with a friendly dog. Sometimes a rabbit would dash out into the road, stop to listen, and dart into the opposite hedge, all hind legs and white scut. But except for these he was alone in the world.

And gradually there began to be borne in upon him the conviction that

he had lost his way,

It is difficult to judge distance when one is walking, but it certainly seemed to Jimmy that he must have covered five miles by this time. He must have mistaken the way. He had certainly come straight. He could not have come straighter. On the other hand, it would be quite in keeping with the cheap substitute which served Spennie Blunt in place of a mind that he should have forgotten to mention some important turning. Jimmy sat down by the roadside.

As he sat, there came to him from down the road the sound of a horse's feet, trotting. He got up. Here was somebody at last who would direct him.

The sound came nearer. The horse turned the corner; and Jimmy saw with surprise that it bore no rider.
"Hullo!" he said. "Accident? And,

by Jove, a side saddle!"

The curious part of it was that the horse appeared in no way a wild horse. It did not seem to be running away. It gave the impression of being out for a little trot on its own account. a sort of equine constitutional.

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Jimmy stopped the horse, and led it back the way it had come. As he turned the bend in the road, he saw a girl in a riding habit running toward him. She stopped running when she caught sight of him, and slowed down to a walk.

"Thank you so much," she said, taking the reins from him, "Oh, Dandy,

you naughty old thing.

Jimmy looked at her flushed, smiling face, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment. The girl was staring at him, open-eyed.
"Molly!" he cried.
"Jimmy!"

And then a curious feeling of constraint fell simultaneously upon them

#### CHAPTER V.

'How are you, Molly?" "Quite well, thank you, Jimmy."

A pause.

"You're looking very well."

"I'm feeling very well. How are "Quite well, thanks. Very well, in-

deed."

Another pause.

And then their eyes met, and at the same moment they burst out laughing.

"Your manners are beautiful, Jimmy, And I'm so glad you're so well! What an extraordinary thing us meeting like this. I thought you were in New York."

"I thought you were. You haven't altered a bit, Molly."

How queer this is! "Nor have you.

I can't understand it."

"Nor can I. I don't want to. I'm satisfied without. Do you know before I met you I was just thinking I hadn't a single friend in this country. I'm on my way to stay with a man I've only known a few days, and his people, whom I don't know at all, and a bunch of other guests, whom I've never heard of, and his uncle, who's a sort of human icicle, and his aunt, who makes you feel like thirty cents directly she starts to talk to you, and the family watchdog. who will probably bite me. But now! You must live near here, or you wouldn't be chasing horses about this

"I live at a place called Corven Ab-

bey."
"What Corven Abbey? Why, that's where I'm going."
"Jimmy! Oh, I see. You're Spennie's friend. But where is Spennie?"

"At the abbey by now. He went in the auto with his uncle and aunt." "How did you meet Spennie?"

"Oh, I did a very trifling Good Samaritan act, for which he was unduly grateful, and he adopted me from that moment.

"How long have you been living in England, then? I never dreamed of

you being here."

"I've been on this side about a week. If you want my history in a nutshell, it's this. Rich uncle. Poor nephew. Deceased uncle. Rich nephew. I'm a man with money now. Lots of money.

"How nice for you, Jimmy. Father came into money, too. That's how I come to be over here. I wish you and father had got on better together.'

"Your father, my dear Molly, has a manner with people he is not fond of which purists might call slightly abrupt. Perhaps things will be different, now."

The horse gave a sudden whinny, "I wish you wouldn't do that sort of thing without warning," said Jimmy to

it plaintively.
"He knows he's near home, and he knows it's his dinner time. There, now you can see the abbey. How do you

They had reached a point in the road where the fields to the right sloped sharply downward. A few hundred yards away, backed by woods, stood the beautiful home which ex-Policeman McEachern had caused to be builded for him. The setting sun lit up the waters of the lake. No figures were to be seen moving in the grounds. The place resembled a palace of sleep.

"Well?" said Molly.

"By Jove!"

"Isn't it?" said Molly. "I'm so glad

you like it. I always feel as if I had invented everything round here. hurts me if people don't appreciate it. Once I took Sir Thomas Blunt up here. It was as much as I could do to induce him to come at all. He simply won't walk. When we got to where we are standing now, I pointed and said: 'There!'

"And what did he do? Moan with

joy?"
"He grunted, and said it struck him

"Beast! I met Sir Thomas when we got off the train. Spennie Blunt introduced me to him. He seemed to bear it pluckily, but with some difficulty. I think we had better be going, or they

will be sending out search parties."
"By the way, Jimmy," said Molly, as they went down the hill.

"Can I what?"

"Act. In theatricals, you know." "I've never tried. But I've played poker, which I should think is much the

same.

"We are going to do a play, and we want another man. The man who was going to play one of the parts has had to go back to London."

"Poor devil! Fancy having to leave a place like this and go back to that

dingy, overrated town.

The big drawing-room of the abbey was full when they arrived. Tea was going on in a desultory manner. In a chair at the far end of the room, Sir Thomas Blunt surveyed the scene gloomily through the smoke of a cigarette. The sound of Lady Blunt's voice had struck their ears as they The Maxim gun opened the door. was in action with no apparent prospect of jamming. The target of the moment was a fair, tired-looking lady, with a remarkable resemblance to Spennie. Jimmy took her to be his hostess. There was a resigned expression on her face, which he thoroughly understood. He sympathized with her.

The other occupants of the room stared for a moment at Jimmy in the austere manner peculiar to the Briton who sees a stranger, and then resumed their respective conversations. One of their number, a slight, pale, young man, as scientifically clothed as Sir Thomas, left his group, and addressed himself to

"Ah, here you are, Miss McEachern," he said. "At last. We were all getting

so anxious.

"Really?" said Molly. "That's very

kind of you, Mr. Wesson."

"I assure you, yes. Positively. A gray gloom had settled upon us. We pictured you in all sorts of horrid situations. I was just going to call for volunteers to scour the country, or whatever it is that one does in such circumstances. I used to read about it in books, but I have forgotten the technical term. I am relieved to find that you are not even dusty, though it would have been more romantic if you could have managed a little dust here and there. But don't consider my feelings, Miss McEachern, please."

Molly introduced Jimmy to the newcomer. They shook hands, Jimmy with something of the wariness of a boxer in the ring. He felt an instinctive distrust of this man. Why, he could not have said. Perhaps it was a certain subtle familiarity in his manner of speaking to Molly that annoyed him. Jimmy objected strongly to any one addressing her as if there existed between them some secret understanding. Already the mood of the old New York days was strong upon him. His instinct then had been to hate all her male acquaintances with an unreasoning hatred. He found himself in much the same frame of mind, now.

"So you're Spennie's friend," said Mr. Wesson, "the man who's going to show us all how to act, what?"

"I believe there is some idea of my being a 'confused noise without,' or

something."

"Haven't they asked you to play Lord Algernon?" inquired Wesson, with more animation than he usually allowed himself to exhibit.

"Who is Lord Algernon?"

"Only a character in the piece we are acting.

"What does he do?"

"He talks to me most of the time," said Molly.

"Then," said Jimmy decidedly, "I seem to see myself making a big hit." "It's a long part if you aren't used

to that sort of thing," said Wesson. He had hoped that the part with its wealth of opportunity would have fal-

len to himself.

"I am used to it," said Jimmy. "Thanks.

"If that little beast's after Molly." thought Jimmy, "there will be trouble."
"Come along," said Molly, "and be introduced, and get some tea."

"Well, Molly, dear," said Lady Jane, with a grateful smile at the interruption, "we didn't know what had become

of you. Did Dandy give you trouble?"
"Dandy's a darling, and wouldn't do
anything of the sort if you asked him to. He's a kind little 'oss, as Thomas says. He only walked away when I got off to pick some roses, and I couldn't catch him. And then I met Jimmy.

Jimmy bowed.
"I hope you aren't tired out," said Lady Jane to him. "We thought you would never arrive. It's such a long walk. It was really too careless of Spennie not to let us know when he expected you."

"I was telling Spencer in the automobile," put in Lady Blunt, with ferocity, "that my father would have horsewhipped him if he had been a son of

his. He would.'

"Really, Julia!" protested Lady Jane rather faintly.

"That's so. And I don't care who knows it. A boy doesn't want to forget things if he's going to make his way in the world. I told Spencer so in the automobile."

Jimmy had noticed that Spennie was not in the room. He now understood his absence. After the ride he had probably felt that an hour or two passed out of his aunt's society would not do him any harm. He was now undergoing a rest cure, Jimmy imagined, in the billiard room.

"I can assure you," said he, by way

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of lending a helping hand to the absent one, "I really preferred to walk. have only just landed in England from New York, and it's quite a treat to walk on an English country road again."

"Are you from New York? I won-

der if-

'Jimmy's an old friend," said Molly. "We knew him very well indeed. was such a surprise meeting him.

"How interesting," said Lady Jane languidly, as if the intellectual strain of the conversation had been too much for her. "You will have such lots to

talk about, won't you?"
"I say," said Jimmy, as they moved away, "who is that fellow Wesson?

"Oh, a man," said Molly vaguely. "There's no need to be fulsome," said limmy. "He can't hear." "Mother likes him. I don't."

"Mother?"

"Hullo," said Molly. "there's father." The door had opened while they were talking, and Mr. Patrick McEachern had walked solidly into the room. The ornaments on the Chippendale tables jingled as he came. Secretly he was somewhat embarrassed at finding himself in the midst of so many people. He had not vet mastered the art of feeling at home in his own house. At meals he did not tear his wife's guests so much. Their attention was in a manner distributed at such times, instead of being, as now, focused upon himself. He stood there square and massive, outwardly the picture of all that was rugged and independent, looking about him for a friendly face. To offer a general remark, or to go boldly and sit down beside one of those dazzling young ladies, like some heavyweight spider beside a Miss Muffet, was beyond him. In his time he had stopped runaway horses, clubbed mad dogs, and helped to break up East Side gang fights, when the combatants on both sides were using their guns lav-ishly and impartially; but his courage failed him here

"Why," said Jimmy, "is your tather here, too? I didn't know that."

so himself he reviled his tuck. How

much would he see of Molly now? Her father's views on himself were no sealed book to him.

Molly looked at him in surprise. "Didn't know?" she said. "Didn't I tell you the place belonged to father?" "What!" said Jimmy, "This house?"

"Yes. Of course."

"And-by gad, I've got it. He has married Spennie Blunt's mother."

"Well, I'm-surprised."

Suddenly he began to chuckle.

"What is it, Jimmy?"

"Why-why, I've just grasped the fact that your father—your father, mind you—is my host. I'm the honored guest. At his house!"

The chuckle swelled into a laugh. The noise attracted McEachern's attention, and, looking in the direction whence it proceeded, he caught sight of Molly.

With a grin of joy, he made for the

"Well, father, dear?" said Molly nervously

Mr. McEachern was staring horribly at Jimmy, who had risen to his feet. "How do you do, Mr. McEachern?"

The ex-policeman continued to stare. "Father," said Molly in distress. "Father, let me present—I mean, don't you remember Jimmy? You must remember Jimmy, father! Jimmy Pitt, whom you used to know in New York.

#### CHAPTER VI.

On his native asphalt there are few situations capable of throwing the New York policeman off his balance. In that favored clime, savoir faire is represented by a shrewd left hook at the jaw, and a masterful stroke of the truncheon amounts to a satisfactory repartee. Thus shall you never take the policeman of Manhattan without his answer. In other surroundings, Mr. Patrick Mc-Eachern would have known how to dear with his young acquaintance, Mr. Jimmy Pitt. But another plan of action was needed here. First of all, the hints on etiquette with which Lady Jane had favored him, from time to time, and foremost came the mandate: "Never make a scene." Scenes, Lady Jane had explained—on the occasion of his knocking down an objectionable cabman during their honeymoon trip were of all things what polite society most resolutely abhorred. The natural man in him must be bound in chains. The sturdy blow must give way to the honeyed word. A cold "Really!" was the most vigorous retort that the best circles would countenance.

It had cost Mr. McEachern some pains to learn this lesson, but he had done it; and he proceeded on the present occasion to conduct himself high and disposedly, according to instruc-

tions from headquarters.

The surprise of finding an old acquaintance in this company rendered him dumb for a brief space, during which Jimmy looked after the conversa-

"How do you do, Mr. McEachern?" inquired Jimmy genially. "Quite a surprise meeting you in England. A pleasant surprise. By the way, one generally shakes hands in the smartest cir-Yours seem to be down there Might I trouble you? somewhere. Right. Got it? Thanks!"

He bent forward, possessed himself of Mr. McEachern's right hand, which was hanging limply at its proprietor's

side, shook it warmly, and replaced it. "'Wahye?" asked Mr. McEachern gruffly, giving a pleasing air of novelty to the hackneyed salutation by pronouncing it as one word. He took some little time getting into his stride when carrying on polite conversation.

"Very well, thank you. You're looking as strong as ever, Mr. McEach-

The ex-policeman grunted. In a conversational sense, he was sparring

for wind.

Molly had regained her composure by this time. Her father was taking the thing better than she had expected.

"It's Jimmy, father, dear," she said.

"Jimmy Pitt."

"Dear old James," murmured the vis-

"I know, me dear, I know. Wahye?" "Still well," replied Jimmy cheerfully. "Sitting up, you will notice," he added, waving a hand in the direction of his teacup, "and taking nourishment. No further bulletins will be issued."
"Immy is staying here, father. He A

is the friend Spennie was bringing."

"This is the friend that Spennie brought," said Jimmy in a rapid undertone. "This is the maiden all forlorn who crossed the seas, and lived in the house that sheltered the friend that Spennie brought.'

"I see, me dear," said Mr. McEachern slowly. "'Wah-""

"No, I've guessed that one already," said Jimmy. "Ask me another."

Molly looked reproachfully at him. His deplorable habit of chaffing her father had caused her trouble in the old days. It may be admitted that this recreation of Jimmy's was not in the best taste; but it must also be remembered that the relations between the two had always been out of the ordinary. Great as was his affection for Molly, Jimmy could not recollect a time when war had not been raging in a greater orlesser degree between the ex-policeman and himself.

"It is very kind of you to invite me down here," said he. "We shall be able to have some cozy chats over old times when I was a wanderer on the face of

the earth, and you-

"Yis, yis," interrupted Mr. McEachern hastily, "somewhere ilse, afther-

"You shall choose time and place, of course. I was only going to ask you how you liked leaving the-"

"United States?" put in Mr. Mc-Eachern, with an eagerness which broadened his questioner's friendly smile, as the Honorable Louis Wesson came toward them.

"Well, I'm not after saying it was not a wrinch at firrst, but I considered it best to lave Wall Street-Wall Street, ye understand, before-

"I see. Before you fell a victim to the feverish desire for reckless speculation which is so marked a characteristic of the American business man, what?"

"That's it," said the other, relieved. "I, too, have been speculating," said

Mr. Wesson, "as to whether you would care to show me the rose garden, Miss McEachern, as you promised yesterday. Of all flowers, I love roses best. You remember Bryant's lines, Miss McEachern? 'The rose that lives its little hour is prized beyond the sculptured flow-er."

Jimmy interposed firmly. "I'm very sorry," he said, "but the fact is Miss McEachern has just promised to take

me with her to feed the fowls.
"I gamble on fowls," he thought. "There must be some in a high-class establishment of this kind."

"I'd quite forgotten," said Molly. "I thought you had. We'd better Nothing upsets a fowl start at once. more than having to wait for dinner."

"Nonsense, me dear Molly," said Mr. McEachern bluffly. "Run along and show Mr. Wesson the roses. Nobody wants to waste time over a bunch of hens.'

"Perhaps not," said Jimmy thoughtfully, "perhaps not. I might be better employed here, amusing the people by telling them all about our old New York days and-

Mr. McEachern might have been observed, and was so observed by Jimmy, to swallow somewhat convulsively

"But as Molly promised ye-" said

he.
"Just so," said Jimmy. "My own Shall we sentiments, neatly expressed. Shall we start, Miss McEachern?"

"That fellah," said Mr. Wesson solemnly to his immortal soul, "is a damn bounder. And cad," he added after a moment's reflection.

The fowls lived in a little world of noise and smells at the back of the stables. The first half of the journey thither was performed in silence. Molly's cheerful little face was set in what she probably imagined to be a forbidding scowl. The tilt of her chin spoke of displeasure.

"If a penny would be any use to you," said Jimmy, breaking the tension.

"I'm not at all pleased with you," said Molly severely.

"How can you say such savage things! And me an orphan, too!

What's the trouble? What have I done?"

"You know perfectly well. Making fun of father like that."

"My dear girl, he loved it. Brainy badinage of that sort is exchanged every day in the best society. You should hear dukes and earls! The wit! the esprit! The flow of soul! Mine is nothing to it. What's this in the iron pot? Is this what you feed them? Oueer birds, hens-I wouldn't touch the stuff for a fortune. It looks perfectly poisonous. Flock around, you pullets. Come in your thousands. All bad nuts returned, and a souvenir goes with every corpse. A little more of this pubrescent mixture for you, sir. Certainly, pick up your dead, pick up your dead."

An unwilling dimple appeared on Molly's chin, like a sunbeam through

"All the same," she said, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Jimmy.

"I haven't time when I find myself stopping in the same house with a girl I've been looking for for three years."

Molly looked away. There was silence for a moment.

"Used you ever to think of me?" she said quietly.

That curious constraint which had fallen upon Jimmy in the road came to him again, now, as sobering as a blow. Something which he could not define had changed the atmosphere. Suddenly in an instant, like a shallow stream that runs babbling over the stones into some broad, still pool, the note of their talk had deepened.

"Yes," he said simply. He could find no words for what he wished to say.

"I've thought of you-often," said Molly.

He took a step toward her. But the moment had passed. Her mood had changed in a flash, or seemed to have changed. The stream babbled on over the stones again.

"Be careful, Jimmy! You nearly touched me with the spoon. I don't want to be covered with that horrible stuff. Look at that poor, little chicken out there in the cold. It hasn't had a morsel."

Jimmy responded to her lead. There was nothing else for him to do.

"It's in luck," he said. "Give it a spoonful."

"It can have one if it likes. But it's taking big risks. Here you are, Hercules. Pitch in."

He scraped the last spoonful out of the iron pot, and they began to walk back to the house.

"You're very quiet, Jimmy," said

Molly.

"I was thinking."
"What about?"
"Lots of things."
"New York?"

"That among others."

"Dear old New York," said Molly, with a little sigh. "I'm not sure it wasn't—I mean, I sometimes wish—oh, you know. I mean it's lovely here, but it was nice in the old days, wasn't it, Jimmy? It's a pity that things change, isn't it?"

"It depends."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't mind things changing, if people don't."

"Do you think I've changed? You

said I hadn't when we met in the road."
"You haven't, as far as looks go."
"Have I changed in other ways?"

Jimmy looked at her.

"I don't know," he said slowly.

They were in the hall, now. Keggs had just left after beating the dressing gong. The echoes of it still lingered. Molly paused on the bottom step.

"I haven't, Jimmy," she said; and ran on up the stairs.

#### CHAPTER VII.

Jimmy dressed for dinner in a very exalted frame of mind that night. It seemed to him that he had awakened from a sort of a stupor. Life was so much fuller of possibilities than he had imagined a few days back. The sudden acquisition of his uncle's money had, in a manner, brought him to a halt. Till then the exhilarating feeling of having

his hand against the world had lent a zest to life. There had been no monotony. There had always been obstacles. One may hardly perhaps dilate on the joys of toil in connection with him, considering the precise methods by which he had supported himself; but nevertheless his emotions when breaking the law of the United States had been akin to those of the honest worker in so far that his operations had satisfied the desire for action which possesses every man of brains and energy. They had given him something to do. He had felt alive. His uncle's legacy had left him with a sensation of abrupt stoppage. Life had suddenly become aimless.

But now everything was altered, Once more the future was a thing of importance, to-morrow a day to be looked forward to with keen expecta-

tion

He tried to throw his mind back to the last occasion when he had seen He could not remember that he had felt any excessive emotion. Between camaraderie and love there is a broad gulf. It had certainly never been bridged in the old New York days. Then the frank friendliness of which the American girl appears to have the monopoly had been Molly's chief charm in his eyes. It had made possible a comradeship such as might have existed between men. But now there was a difference. England seemed to have brought about a subtle change in her. Instinctively he felt that the old friendship, adequate before, was not enough now. He wanted more. The unexpected meeting, following so closely upon Spike's careless words in London, had shown him his true feelings. Misgivings crept upon him. Had he a right? Was it fair? He looked back at the last eight years of his life with the eye of an impartial judge. He saw them stripped of the glamour which triumphant cunning had lent them; saw them as they would appear to Molly.

He scowled at his reflection in the glass. "You've been a bad lot, my son," he said. "There's only one thing in your favor; and that is the fact that

you've cut it all out for keeps. We must be content with that."

There was a furtive rap at the door. "Hullo?" said Jimmy. "Yes?"

The door opened slowly. A grin, surmounted by a mop of red hair, appeared round the edge of it.

"Well, Spike. Come in. What's the

matter?"

The rest of Mr. Mullins entered the

room.

"Gee, Mr. Chames, I wasn't sure dat dis was your room. Say, who do youse t'ink I nearly bumped me coco ag'in out in de corridor? Why, old man Mc-Eachern, de cop. Dat's right!"

"Yes?"

"Sure. Say, what's he doin' on dis beat? Youse c'u'd have knocked me down wit' a bit of poiper when I see him. I pretty near went down and out, Dat's right. Me heart ain't got back home yet."

"Did he recognize you?"

"Sure! He starts like an actor on top de stoige when he sees he's up against de plot to ruin him, an' he gives me de fierce eye."

"Well?"

"I was wondering was I on Third Avenue, or was I standing on me coco, or what was I doin', anyhow. Den I slips off and chases meself up here. Say, Mr. Chames, can youse put me wise? What's de game? What's old man Mc-Eachern doin' stunts dis side for?"

"It's all right, Spike. Keep calm. I can explain. Mr. McEachern owns the

house."

"On your way, Mr. Chames! What's

dat?"

"This is his house we're in, now. He left the force three years ago, came over here, and bought this place. And here we are again, all gathered together under the same roof, like a jolly little family party."

Spike's open mouth bore witness to

his amazement.

"Den all dis---'

"Belongs to him? That's it. We are his guests, Spike."

"But what's he goin' to do?"

"I couldn't say. I'm expecting to hear shortly. But we needn't worry ourselves. The next move's with him. If he wants to say anything about it, he must come to me."

"Sure. It's up to him," agreed Spike,
"I'm quite comfortable. Speaking
for myself, I'm having a good time.
How are you getting on downstairs?"

"De limit, Mr. Chames. Honest, I'm on pink velvet. Dey's an old gazebo, de butler, Keggs his name is, dat's de best ever at handing out long woids. I sit and listen. Dey calls me Mr. Mullins down dere," said Spike, with pride.

"Good. I'm glad you're all right. There's no reason why we shouldn't have an excellent time here. I don't think that Mr. McEachern will turn us out, after he's heard one or two little things I have to say to him. Just a few reminiscences of the past which may interest him. I have the greatest affection for Mr. McEachern, though he did club me once with his night stick; but nothing shall make me stir from here for the next week at any rate."

"Not on your life," agreed Spike. "Say, Mr. Chames, he must have got a lot of plunks to buy dis place. And I know how he got dem, too. Dat's right. I comes from old New York meself."

"Hush, Spike, this is scandal!"
"Sure," said the Bowery boy doggedly, securely mounted now on his favorite hobby horse. "I knows, and youse knows, Mr. Chames. Gee, I wish I'd bin a cop. But I wasn't tall enough. Dey's de fellers wit' de long green in der banks. Look at dis old McEachern. Money to boin a wet dog wit', he's got, and never a bit of woik for it from de start to de finish. An' look at me, Mr. Chames."

"I do, Spike, I do."

"Look at me. Getting busy all de year round, woiking to beat de band all—"

"In prisons oft," said Jimmy.

"Dat's right. And chased all roun' de town. And den what? Why, to de bad at de end of it all. Say, it's enough to make a feller—"

"Turn honest," said Jimmy. "You've hit it, Spike. You'll be glad some day

that you reformed."

But on this point Spike seemed to be doubtful. He was silent for a moment; then, as if following upon a train of thoughts, he said: "Mr. Chames, dis is a fine big house."

"Splendid!"

"Say, couldn't we-" "Spike!" said Jimmy warningly.

"Well, couldn't we?" said Spike doggedly. "It ain't often youse butts into a dead-easy proposition like dis one. We shouldn't have to do a t'ing excep' git busy. De stuff's just lying about, Mr. Chames.'

"I have noticed it."

"Aw, it's a waste to leave it."

"Spike," said Jimmy, "I warned you of this. I begged you to be on your guard, to fight against your professional instincts; and you must do it. I know it's hard, but it's got to be done. Try and occupy your mind. Collect butterflies.'

Spike shuffled in gloomy silence. "'Member dose jools we got in de hotel de year before I was copped?" he asked at length irrelevantly.

Jimmy finished tying his tie, looked at the result for a moment in the glass, then replied: "Yes, I remember."

"We got anudder key dat fitted de door. 'Member dat?"

Jimmy nodded.

And some of dose knock-out drops. What's dat? Chloryform? Dat's right. An' we didn't do a t'ing else. An' we lived for de rest of de year on dose jools."

Spike paused.

"Dat was to de good," he said wist-

Jimmy made no reply.
"Dere's a loidy here," continued Spike, addressing the chest of drawers, "dat's got a necklace of jools what's wort' two hundred thousand plunks."
"I know."

Silence again. "Two hundred thousand plunks," breathed Spike.

"What a necklace!" thought Jimmy. "Keggs told me dat. De old gazebo what hands out de long woids. I could find out where dey're kept dead easy."

"What a king of necklaces!" thought Jimmy.

"Shall I, Mr. Chames?"

"Shall you what?" asked Jimmy, coming out of his thoughts with a

"Why, find out where de loidy keeps de jools."

"Confound you, Spike! How often am I to tell you that I have done with all that sort of thing forever? I never want to see or touch another stone that doesn't belong to me. I don't want to hear about them. They don't interest

"Sorry, Mr. Chames. But dev must cop de limit for fair, dose jools. Two What's dat hundred t'ousand plunks!

dis side?"

"Forty thousand pounds," said Jimmy shortly. "Now, drop it."

"Yes, Mr. Chames. Can I help

youse wit' de duds?"

"No, thanks, Spike; I'm through, now. You might just give me a brush down, though, if you don't mind. Not That's a hair brush. Try the big black one."

"Dis is a dude suit for fair," observed Spike, pausing in his labors.

"Glad you like it, Spike."

"It's de limit. Excuse me. How much of de long green did youse pungle for it, Mr. Chames?"

"I really can't remember," said Jimmy, with a laugh. "I could look up the bill and let you know. Seventy guineas, I fancy.

"What's dat-guineas? Is dat more

dan a pound?"

"A shilling more. Why?" Spike resumed his brushing.

"What a lot of dude suits youse could get," he observed meditatively, "if youse had dose jools."

"Oh, curse the jewels for the hundredth time!" snapped Jimmy.

"Yes, Mr. Chames. But, say, dat must be a boid of a necklace, dat one. You'll be seeing it at de dinner, Mr.

Whatever comment Jimmy might have made on this insidious statement was checked by a sudden bang on the door. Almost simultaneously the handle turned.

"P'Chee!" cried Spike. "It's de cop!"

Jimmy smiled pleasantly.

"Come in, Mr. McEachern," he said, "come in. Journeys end in lovers meeting. You know my friend, Mr. Mullins, I think? Shut the door, and sit down, and let's talk of many things."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

"It's a conspiracy!" thundered Mr.

McEachern.

He stood in the doorway, breathing heavily. It has been shown that the expoliceman was somewhat prone to harbor suspicions of those round about him, and at the present moment his mind was aflame. Indeed, a more trusting man might have been excused for feeling a little doubtful as to the intentions of Jimmy and Spike. When McEachern had heard that his stepson had brought home a casual London acquaintance, he had suspected the existence of hidden motives on the part of the unknown. Spennie, he had told himself, was precisely the sort of youth to whom the professional bunko-steerer would attach himself with shouts of joy. Never, he had assured himself, had there been a softer proposition than his stepson since bunko-steering became a profession.

When he found that the strange visitor was Jimmy Pitt, his suspicions had

increased a thousandfold.

And when, going to his dressing room to get ready for dinner, he had nearly run into Spike Mullins, Red Spike of shameful memory, his frame of mind had been that of a man to whom a sudden ray of light reveals the fact that he is on the very brink of a black precipice. Jimmy and Spike had been a firm in New York. And here they were, together again, in his house in Shropshire. To say that the thing struck McEachern as sinister is to put the matter baldly. There was once a gentleman who remarked that he smelt a rat and saw it floating in the air. Ex-constable McEachern smelt a regiment of rats, and the air seemed to him positively congested with them.

His first impulse had been to rush to Jimmy's room there and then; but Lady Jane had trained him well. Though the heavens might fall, he must not be late for dinner. So he went and dressed, and an obstinate tie put the finishing touches to his wrath.

Jimmy regarded him coolly, without moving from the chair in which he had seated himself. Spike, on the other hand, seemed embarrassed. He stood first on one leg and then on the other. as if he were testing the respective merits of each, and would make a definite choice later on.

"Ye scoundrels!" growled McEach-

Spike, who had been standing for a few moments on his right leg, and seemed at last to have come to a decision, hastily changed to the left, and grinned feebly.

"Say, youse won't want me any more, Mr. Chames?" he whispered.

"No; you can go, Spike.' "Ye stay where y'are, ye red-headed limb."

"Run along, Spike!" said Jimmy, The Bowery boy looked doubtfully at the huge form of the ex-policeman, which blocked access to the door.

"Would you mind letting my man pass?" said Jimmy. "Ye stay——" began McEachern. Jimmy got up, and walked round him to the door, which he opened. Spike shot out like a rabbit released from a trap. He was not lacking in courage, but he disliked embarrassing interviews, and it struck him that Mr. Chames was the man to handle a situation of this kind. He felt that he himself would only be in the way.

"Now we can talk comfortably," said Jimmy, going back to his chair.

McEachern's deep-set eyes gleamed, and his forehead grew red; but he mastered his feelings.

"An' now," said he, "perhaps ye'll explain!"

"What exactly?" asked Jimmy. "What ye're doin' here.

"Nothing at the moment."

"Ye know what I mane. Why are ye here, you and that red-headed

He jerked his head in the direction of

the door.

"I am here because I was very kindly invited to come by your stepson." "I know ve."

"You have that privilege."

"I know ye, I say, and I want to

know what ye're here to do."

"To do? Well, I shall potter about the garden, don't you know, and smell the roses, and look at the horses, and feed the chickens, and perhaps go for an occasional row on the lake. Nothing more. Oh, yes, I believe they want me to act in these theatricals."

"An' I'll tell ye another thing ye'll be wanted to do, and that is to go away

from here at wance!"

"My dear old sir!"

"Ye hear me? At wance."

"Couldn't think of it," said Jimmy decidedly. "Not for a moment."

"I'll expose ye," stormed McEachern. "I'll expose ye. Will ye deny that ye was a crook in New York?"

"What proofs have you?" "Proofs! Will you deny it?"

"No. It's quite true."
"I knew it."

"But I'm a reformed character, now, Mr. McEachern. I have money of my own. It was left me. I hear you had money left you, too."
"I did," said McEachern shortly.

"Congratulate you. I'm glad I know, because otherwise I might have formed quite a wrong impression when I came here and found you with money to Quite the old English squire now, Mr. McEachern, what?"

"Ye'll lave the house to-morrow." "All the more reason why we should make the most of this opportunity of talking over old times. Did you mind leaving the force?"

"And ye'll take that blackguard Mul-

lins wid ye."

"Judging from the stories one hears. it must be a jolly sort of life. What a pity so many of them go in for graft. I could tell you some stories about a policeman I used to know in New York,

He was the champion grafter. I remember hearing one yarn from a news-paper man out there. This reporter chap happened to hear of the grumblings of some tenants of an apartment house uptown which led them to believe that certain noises they complained of were made by burglars who used the flat as a place to pack up the loot for shipment to other cities. You know that habit of ours, don't you? He was quite right, and when he tipped off his newspaper they reported the thing to the police. Now, I could have gone right up and made those men show up their hands by merely asking them to.

"Not so the police. I wonder if you remember the case. You look as if you were beginning to. The police went blundering at wrong doors, and most of the gang got away. And while they were in the house after the raid a woman was able to slip in and take away on an express wagon the three trunks which were to have been held for evidence. And that's not all, either. There was one particular policeman who held the case for the prosecution in his hands. If he had played up in court next day, the one man that had been captured would have got all that was coming to him. What happened? Why, his evidence broke down, and the man was discharged. It's a long story. I hope it hasn't bored you.

McEachern did not look bored. He was mopping his forehead, and breath-

ing quickly.

"It was a most interesting case," said Jimmy. "I've got all the names."

"It's a lie!"

"Not at all. True as anything. Ever heard of that policeman-I've got his name, too-who made a lot of money by getting appointments in the force for men of his acquaintance? He used to be paid heavily for it, and you'd hardly believe what a lot of scoundrels he let in in that way."
"See here——" began McEachern

huskily.

"I wonder if you ever came across any men in the force who made anything by that dodge of arresting a person and then getting a lawyer for tha the SUS a 1 1112 lar acc the abl pri yer ge

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ci st r them. Ever heard of that? It's rather like a double ruff at bridge. You-I'm awfully sorry. I shouldn't have used that word. What I meant to say was the policeman makes his arrest, then suggests that the person had better have a bondsman. He gathers in a bondsman, who charges the prisoner four dollars for bailing him out. Two dollars of this goes to the sergeant, who accepts the bail without question, and the policeman takes one. Then the able and intelligent officer says to the prisoner: 'What you want is a lawyer.' 'Right,' says the prisoner, 'if you think so.' Off goes the policeman and gets the lawyer. Five more dollars, of which he gets his share. It's a beautiful system. It might interest the people at dinner to-night to hear about it. I think I'll tell them."
"You'll---"

"And when you come to think that some policemen in New York take tribute from peddlers who obstruct the traffic, tradesmen who obstruct the sidewalk, restaurant keepers who keep open after one o'clock in the morning, driv-ers who exceed speed limits, and keepers of pool rooms, you'll understand that there's a good bit to be made out of graft, if you go in for it seriously. It's uncommonly lucky, McEachern, that you were left that money. Otherwise you might have been tempted, mightn't

There was a somewhat breathless silence in the room. Mr. McEachern

was panting slightly.

"You couldn't reconsider your decision about sending me away to-morrow, I suppose?" said Jimmy, flicking at his shoes with a handkerchief. "It's a lovely part of the country, this. I would be

sorry to leave it."

Mr. McEachern's brain was working with unwonted rapidity. This man must be silenced at all costs. It would be fatal to his prospects in English society if one tithe of these gruesome stories were made public. And he believed Jimmy capable of making them public, being guilty thereby of an error of judgment. Jimmy, though he had no respect at all for Mr. McEachern, would have died sooner than spread any story which, even in an indirect way, could reflect upon Molly. Mr. McEachern, however, had not the advantage of knowing his antagonist's feelings, and the bluff was successful. "Ye can stay," he said.

"Thanks," said Jimmy.

"And I'll beg ye not to mention the force at dinner or at any other time."

"I won't dream of it."

"They think I made me money on

Wall Street."

"It would have been a slower job there. You were wise in your choice. Shall we go down to the drawing-room,

"Ye say y'are rich yerself," said Mc-

Eachern.

"Very," said Jimmy, "so don't you worry yourself, my Wall Street specu-

Mr. McEachern did not worry himself. He had just recollected that in a very short time he would have a trained detective on the premises. Any looking after that James Willoughby Pitt might require might safely be left in the hands of this expert.

#### CHAPTER IX.

It was at dinner that Jimmy had his first chance of seeing the rope of pearls which had so stimulated the roving fancy of Spike Mullins. Lady Blunt sat almost opposite to him. Her dress was of unrelieved black, and formed a wonderfully effective foil to the gems. It was not a rope of pearls. It was a Her neck was covered with them. There was something Oriental and barbaric in the overwhelming display of jewelry. And this suggestion of the East was emphasized by the wearer's regal carriage. Lady Blunt knew when she looked well. She did not hold herself like one apologizing for venturing to exist.

Jimmy stared hungrily across the ta-The room was empty to him but for that gleaming mass of gems. He breathed softly and quickly through

clinched teeth.

"Jimmy!" whispered a voice.

It seemed infinitely remote.

A hand shook his elbow gently. He

"Don't stare like that, please. What

is the matter?

Molly, seated at his side, was looking at him wide-eyed. Jimmy smiled with an effort. Every nerve in his body seemed to be writhing.

"Sorry," he said. "I'm only hungry. I always look like that at the be-

ginning of a meal."

"Well, here comes Keggs with some soup for you. You'd better not waste another moment. You looked perfectly awful.

"No!"

"Like a starved wolf."

"You must look after me," said Jimmy, "see that the wolf's properly fed."

The conversation, becoming general with the fish, was not of a kind to remove from Jimmy's mind the impression made by the sight of the pearls. It turned on crime in general and burglary in particular.

Spennie began it.
"Oh, I say," he said, "I forgot to tell you, mother. Number Six was burgled the other night."

Number Six-a, Easton Square, was

the family's London house.

"Burgled!"

"Well, broken into," said Spennie, gratified to find that he had got the ear of his entire audience. Even Lady Blunt was silent and attentive. "Chap got in through the scullery window about one o'clock, in the morning. It was the night after you dined with me, Pitt."
"And what did our Spennie do?" in-

quired Sir Thomas.

"Oh, I-er-I was out at the time," said Spennie. "But something frightened the feller," he went on hurriedly, "and he made a bolt for it without tak-

ing anything.'

Jimmy, looking down the table, became conscious that his host's eye was fixed gloomily upon him. He knew intuitively what was passing in McEachern's mind. The ex-policeman was feeling that his worst suspicions had been

Jimmy had dined with confirmed. Spennie-obviously a mere excuse for spying out the land; and the very next night the house had been burgled. Once more Mr. McEachern congratulated himself on his astuteness in engaging the detective from Wragge's Agency. With Jimmy above stairs and Spike Mullins below, that sleuthhound would have his hands full.

"Burglary," said Wesson, leaning back and taking advantage of a pause, "is the hobby of the sportsman and the

life work of the avaricious."

Everybody seemed to have something to say on the subject. One young lady gave it as her opinion that she would not like to find a burglar under her bed. Somebody else had known a man whose father had fired at the butler, under the impression that he was a housebreaker, and had broken a valuable bust of Soc-Spennie knew a man at Oxford whose brother wrote lyrics for musical comedy, and had done one about a burglar's best friend being his mother.

"Life," said Wesson, who had had time for reflection, "is a house which we all burgle. We enter it uninvited, take all that we can lay hands on, and

go out again."

"This man's brother I was telling you about," said Spennie, "says there's only one rhyme in the English language

to 'burglar,' and that's 'gurgler.' Unless you count 'pergola.' He says—"
"Personally," said Jimmy, with a glance at McEachern, "I have rather a sympathy for burglars. After all, they are one of the hardest-working classes in existence. They toil while every-body else is asleep. They are generally thorough sportsmen. Besides, a burglar is only a practical socialist. Philosophers talk a lot about the redistribution of wealth. The burglar goes out and does it. I have found burglars some of the decentest criminals I have ever met. Out of business hours they are charming.

"I despise burglars!" ejaculated Lady Blunt, with a suddenness which stopped Jimmy's eloquence as if a tap had been turned off. "If I found one coming after dy, "WI At a burg be." the he 1 kind

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the out a l had after my jewels, and I had a gun han-

dy, I'd shoot him. I would."
"My dear Julia!" said Lady Jane.
"Why suggest such dreadful things?
At any rate, this house has never been burgled, and I don't think it's likely to

"Beroofen!" said Jimmy, touching the back of his chair. As he did so, he met McEachern's eye, and smiled kindly at him. The ex-policeman was looking at him with the gaze of a baffled but malignant basilisk.

"I take very good care no one gets a chance at my jewels," said Lady Blunt. "I've had a steel box made for me with a special lock which would drive the cunningest burglar on this earth mad before he'd been at it ten minutes. It would. He'd go right away and reform."

Jimmy's lips closed tightly, and a combative look came into his eye at this unconscious challenge. This woman was too aggressively confident. A small lesson. He could return the jewels by post. It would give her a muchneeded jolt.

Then he pulled himself up.

"James, my boy," he said to himself, with severity, "this is hypocrisy. You know perfectly well that is not why you want those pearls. Don't try and bluff yourself, because it won't do."

The conversation turned to other topics. Jimmy was glad of it. He wanted

to think this thing over.

From where he sat, he had an excellent view of the rope of pearls which was tugging him back to his old ways. And when he looked at them he could not see Molly. The thing was symbolical. It must be one or the other. He was at the crossroads. The affair was becoming a civil war. He felt like a rudderless boat between two currents. Eight years of gem collecting do not leave a man without a deep-rooted passion for the sport. As for that steel box, that was all nonsense. It was probably quite a good steel box, and the lock might very well be something out of the ordinary; but it could not be a harder job than some of those he had tackled.

The pearls shone in the lamplight. They seemed to be winking at him.

#### CHAPTER X.

In a cozy corner of the electric flame department of the infernal regions there stands a little silver gridiron. It is the private property of his Satanic majesty, and is reserved exclusively for the man who invented amateur theatricals. It is hard to see why the amateur actor has been allowed to work his will unchecked for so long. These performances of his are diametrically opposed to the true sport of civilization, which insists that the good of the many should be considered as being of more importance than that of the few.

In the case of amateur theatricals, a large number of inoffensive people are annoyed simply in order that a mere handful of acquaintances may amuse themselves. Usually the whole thing can be laid at the door of the man, the organizer. He is the serpent in the Eden. Before his arrival, the house party were completely happy, and asked for nothing else but to be left alone. Then he arrives. At breakfast on his first morning, he strikes the first blowcasually helping himself to scrambled eggs the while, with the air of a man uttering some agreeable commonplace. "I say," he remarks, "why not get up some theatricals?" Eve, in the person of some young lady who would be a drawing-room reciter if drawingroom reciters were allowed nowadays, snatches at the apple. "Oh, yes,' she says. "It ought to be for a charity," suggests somebody else. "Of course for a charity," says the serpent. Ten minutes later he has revealed the fact that he has brought down a little thing of his own which will just do, and is casting the parts. And after that the man who loves peace and quiet may as well pack up and leave. He will have no more rest in that house.

In the present case, the serpent was a volatile young gentleman of the name of Charteris. This indomitable person had the love of the stage ineradicably implanted in him. He wrote plays, and

lived in nopes of seeing them staged at the leading theatres. Meanwhile, he was content to bring them out through the medium of amateur performances.

It says much for the basic excellence of this man's character that he was popular among his fellows, who, liking the man, overlooked the amateur stage

manager.

The reign of unrest at the abbey was complete by the time Jimmy arrived there. The preliminary rehearsals had been gone through with by the company, who, being inexperienced, imag-

ined the worst to be over.

Having hustled Jimmy into the vacant part, Charteris gave his energy He conducted rehearsals free play. with a vigor which occasionally almost welded the rabble which he was coaching into something approaching coherency. He never rested. He painted scenery, and left it about-wet-and people sat on it. He nailed up horseshoes for luck, and they fell on people. He distributed typed parts of the play among the company, and they lost them. But nothing daunted him.

"Mr. Charteris," said Lady Blunt after one somewhat energetic rehearsal, "is indefatigable. He whirled me

about!"

This was perhaps his greatest triumph, that he had induced Lady Blunt to take part in the piece. Her first remark, on being asked, had been to the effect that she despised acting. Golden eloquence on the part of the author-manager had induced her to modify this opinion; and finally she had consented, on the understanding that she was not to be expected to attend every rehearsal, to play a small part.

The only drawback to an otherwise attractive scheme was the fact that she would not be able to wear her jewels. Secretly, she would have given much to have done so; but the scene in which she was to appear was a daylight scene, in which the most expensive necklace would be out of place. So she had given up the idea with a stoicism that showed her to be of the stuff of which heroines are made.

These same jewels had ceased, after

their first imperious call, to trouble Jimmy to the extent he had anticipated. It had been a bitter struggle during the first few days of his stay, but gradually he had fought the craving down, and now watched them across the dinner table at night with a calm which filled him with self-righteousness. On the other hand, he was uncomfortably alive to the fact that this triumph of his might be merely temporary. There the gems were, winking and beckoning to him across the table. At any mo-When his thoughts arrived mentat this point, he would turn them-an effort was sometimes necessary—to Molly. Thinking of her, he forgot the pearls.

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But the process of thinking of Molly was not one of unmixed comfort. A great uneasiness had gripped him. More than ever, as the days went by, he knew that he loved her, that now the old easy friendship was a mockery. But on her side he could see no signs that she desired a change in their relationship. She was still the old Molly of the New York days, frank, cheerful, unembarrassed. But he found that in this new world of hers the opportunities of getting her to himself for any space of time were infinitesimal. It was her unfortunate conviction, bred of her American upbringing, that the duty of the hostess is to see that her guests enjoy themselves. Lady Jane held the English view that visitors like to be left to themselves. And Molly, noticing her stepmother's lack of enterprise, and putting it down as merely another proof of her languid nature, had exerted herself all the more keenly to do the

The consequence was that Jimmy found himself one of a crowd, and dis-

liked the sensation.

The thing was becoming intolerable. Here was he, a young man in love, kept from proposing simply by a series of ridiculous obstacles. It could not go on. He must get her away some-where by himself, not for a few minutes, as he had been doing up to the present, but for a solid space of time.

It was after a long and particularly

irritating rehearsal that the idea of the lake suggested itself to him. The rehearsals took place in one of the upper rooms, and through the window, as he leaned gloomily against the wall listening to a homily on the drama from Charteris, he could see the waters of the lake, lit up by the afternoon sun. It had been a terribly hot, oppressive day, and there was thunder in the air. The rehearsal had bored everybody unspeakably. It would be heavenly on the lake, thought Jimmy. There was a Canadian canoe moored to that willow. If he could only get Molly.

"I'm awfully sorry, Jimmy," said Molly, as they walked out into the garden. "I should love to come. It would be too perfect. But I've half promised to play tennis."

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"Who wants to play?"

"Mr. Wesson."

A correspondent of a London daily paper wrote to his editor not long ago to complain that there was a wave of profanity passing over the country. Jimmy added a silent but heartfelt contribution to that wave.
"Give him the slip," he said earnest-

ly. It was the chance of a lifetime, a unique chance, perhaps his last chance, and it was to be lost for the sake of an

ass like Wesson.

Molly looked doubtful.

"Well, come down to the water, and have a look at it," said Jimmy. "That'll

be better than nothing.

They walked to the water's edge together in silence, Jimmy in a fever of anxiety. He looked behind him. No signs of Wesson yet. All might still He looked behind him. No be well.

"It does look nice, Jimmy, doesn't it?" said Molly, placing a foot on the side of the boat and rocking it gently.

"Come on," said Jimmy hoarsely. "Give him the slip. Get in."

Molly looked round hesitatingly. "Well-oh, bother, there he is. And

he's seen me."

Jimmy followed her gaze. The dapper figure of Mr. Wesson was moving down the lawn. He had a tennis racquet in his hand. His face wore an inviting smile.

Jimmy glared at him hopelessly.

Mr. Wesson had vanished now behind the great clump of laurels which stood on the lowest terrace. In another moment he would reappear round them.

"Bother!" said Molly again. "Jimmy!" For gently, but with extreme firmness and dispatch, Jimmy, who ought to have known better, had seized her hand on the other side of the waist, swung her off her feet, and placed her carefully on the cushions in the bow of

Then he had jumped in himself with a force which made the boat rock, and was now paddling with the silent energy of a dangerous lunatic into the middle of the lake; while Mr. Wesson, who had by this time rounded the laurels, stood transfixed, gazing glassily after the retreating vessel.

To the casual spectator, he might

have seemed stricken dumb.

But at the end of the first ten seconds any fear that the casual spectator might have entertained as to the permanence of the seizure would have been relieved.

# CHAPTER XI.

"The man who lays a hand upon a woman," said Jimmy, paddling strongly, "save in the way of kindness I'm very sorry, Molly, but you didn't seem able to make up your mind. You aren't angry, are you?

There was a brief pause, while Molly apparently debated the matter in her

"You wouldn't take me back even if I were angry," she said.

"You have guessed it," said Jimmy provingly. "Do you read much poapprovingly.

etry, Molly?"

"Why?" "I was only thinking how neatly some of these poets put a thing. The chap who said, 'distance lends enchantment to the view,' for instance. Take the case of Wesson. He looks quite nice when you see him at a distance like this, with a good strip of water in between."

Mr. Wesson was still standing in a

statuesque attitude on the bank. Molly, gazing over the side of the boat into the lake, abstained from feasting her eyes on the picturesque spectacle.
"Jolly the water looks," said Jimmy.

"I was just thinking it looked rather

dirty."

"Beastly," agreed Jimmy.

The water as a topic of conversation dried up. Mr. Wesson had started now to leave the stricken field. There was a reproachful look about his back which harassed Molly's sensitive conscience. Jimmy, on the other hand-men being of coarser fibre than women, especially as to the conscience-appeared in no way distressed at the sight.
"You oughtn't to have done it, Jim-

my," said Molly.

"I had to. There seemed to be no other way of ever getting you by yourself for five minutes at a stretch. You're always in the middle of a crowd nowadays.'

"But I must look after my guests." "Not a bit of it. Let 'em rip. Why should they monopolize you?"

"It will be awfully unpleasant meeting Mr. Wesson after this."

"It is always unpleasant meeting Wesson."

"I shan't know what to say."

"Don't say anything."

"I shan't be able to look him in the face."

"That's a bit of luck for you." "You aren't much help, Jimmy."

"The subject of Wesson doesn't inspire me somehow-I don't know why. Besides, you've simply got to say you changed your mind. You're a woman. It's expected of you."

"I feel awfully mean."

"What you want to do is to take your thoughts off the business. Keep your mind occupied with something else. Then you'll forget all about it. Keep talking to me about things. That's the plan. There are heaps of subjects. The weather, for instance, as a start. Hot, isn't it?"

"We're going to have a storm. There's a sort of feel in the air. We'd

better go back, I think."

"Tush! And possibly bah!" said

Jimmy, digging the paddle into the water. "We've only just started. I say, who was that man I saw you talking to after lunch?"

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'How soon after lunch?"

"Just before the rehearsal. He was with your father. Short chap with a square face. Dressed in gray. I hadn't seen him before."

"Oh, that was Mr. Galer.

York friend of father's."

"Did you know him out in New York?"

"I didn't. But he seems to know father very well."

"What's his name, did you say?" "Galer. Samuel Galer. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Never. But there were several people in New York I didn't know. How

did your father meet him over here?" "He was stopping at the inn in the village, and he'd heard about the abbey being so old, so he came over to look at it, and the first person he met was father. He's going to stay in the house now. The cart was sent down for his things this afternoon. Did you feel a spot of rain then? I wish you'd paddle back."

"Not a drop. That storm's not coming till to-night. Why, it's a gorgeous

evening."

He turned the nose of the boat toward the island, which lay, cool and green and mysterious, in the middle of the lake. The heat was intense. The sun, as if conscious of having only a brief spell of work before it, blazed fiercely, with the apparent intention of showing what it could do before the The air felt curiously rain came. parched.

"There!" said Molly. "Surely you

felt something, then."

"I did."

"Is there time to get back before it begins?"
"No."

"We shall get soaked!"

"Not a bit of it. On the other side of the island there is a handy little boathouse sort of place. We will put in

The boathouse was simply a little

creek covered over with boards and capable of sheltering an ordinary rowing boat. Jimmy ran the canoe in just as the storm began, and turned her broadside on so that they could watch the rain, which was sweeping over the lake in sheets.

"Just in time," he said, shipping the paddle. "Snug in here, isn't it?"

"We should have got wet in another minute! I hope it won't last long."

"I hope it will, because I've got something very important to say to you, and I don't want to have to hurry it. Are you quite comfortable?"

"Yes, thanks."

"I don't know how to put it exactly. I mean, I don't want to offend you or anything. What I mean to say is—do you mind if I smoke? Thanks. I don't know why it is, but I always talk easier if I've got a cigarette going."

He rolled one with great deliberation and care. Molly watched him admir-

ingly.

"You're the only man I've ever seen roll a cigarette properly, Jimmy," she said. "Everybody else leaves them all habby at the onle."

flabby at the ends."
"I learned the trick from a little Italian who kept a clothing store in the Bowery. It was the only useful thing he could do."

"Look at the rain!"
Jimmy leaned forward.
"Molly——"

"I wonder if poor Mr. Wesson got indoors before it began. I do hope he

Jimmy sat back again. He scowled. Every man is liable on occasion to behave like a sulky schoolboy. Jimmy did so.

"You seem to spend most of your time thinking about Wesson," he said

savagely.

Molly had begun to hum a tune to herself as she watched the rain. She stopped. A profound and ghastly silence brooded over the canoe.

"Molly," said Jimmy at last, "I'm

sorry."

No reply. "Molly." "Well?"

"I'm sorry."

Molly turned.
"I wish you wouldn't say things like that, Jimmy. It hurts—from you."

He could see that there were tears in her eyes.

"Molly, don't!"

She turned her head away once more. "I can't help it, Jimmy. It hurts. Everything's so changed. I'm miserable. You wouldn't have said a thing like that in the old days."

"Molly, if you knew-"

"It's all right, Jimmy. It was silly of me. I'm all right now! The rain has stopped. Let's go back, shall we?" "Not yet. For God's sake, not yet!

This is my only chance. Directly we get back, it will be the same miserable business all over again; the same that it's been every day since I came to this place. Heavens! When you first told me that you were living at the abbey, I was absolutely happy, like a fool. I might have known how it would be. Every day there's a crowd round you. I never get a chance of talking to you. I consider myself lucky if you speak a couple of words to me. If I'd known the slow torture it was going to be, I'd have taken the next train back to London. I can't stand it. Molly, you remember what friends we were in the old days. Was it ever anything more with you? Was it? Is it now?

"I was very fond of you, Jmmy." He could hardly hear the words.

"Was it ever anything more than that? Is it now? That was three years ago. You were a child. We were just good friends then. I don't want friendship now. It's not enough. I want you—you. You were right a moment ago. Everything has changed. For me, at least. Has it for you? Has it for you, Molly?"

On the island a thrush had begun to sing. Molly raised her head, as if to listen. The water lapped against the sides of the canoe.

"Has it, Molly?"

She bent over, and dabbled one finger in the water.

"I—I think it has, Jimmy," she whispered.

#### CHAPTER XII.

The Honorable Louis Wesson, meanwhile, having left the water side, lit a cigarette, and proceeded to make a moody tour of the grounds. He felt aggrieved with the world. One is never at one's best and sunniest when a rival has performed a brilliant and successful piece of cutting-out work beneath one's very eyes. Something of a jaundiced tinge stains one's outlook on life in such circumstances. Mr. Wesson did not pretend to himself that he was violently in love with Molly. But he certainly admired her, and intended, unless he changed his mind later on, to marry her.

He walked, drawing thoughtfully at his cigarette. The more he reviewed the late episode, the less he liked it. He had not seen Jimmy put Molly in the cance, and her departure seemed to him a deliberate desertion. She had promised to play tennis with him, and at the last moment she had gone off with this fellow Pitt. Who was Pitt? He was always in the way—shoving himself in.

At this moment, a large, warm raindrop fell on his harid. From the bushes all round came an ever-increasing pat-

ter. The sky was leaden.

He looked round him for shelter. He had reached the rose garden in the course of his perambulations. At the far end was a summerhouse. He turned

up his coat collar and ran.

As he drew near, he heard a slow and dirgelike whistling proceeding from the interior. Plunging in out of breath, just as the deluge began, he found Spennie seated at the little wooden table with an earnest expression on his face. The table was covered with cards.

"How Jim took exercise," said Spennie, glancing up. "Hello, Wesson. By

Jove, isn't it coming down!"

With which greeting he turned his attention to his cards once more. He took one from the pack in his left hand, looked at it, hesitated for a moment, as if doubtful whereabouts on the table it would produce the most artistic effect; and finally put it down, face upward.

Then he moved another card from the table, and put it on top of the other one. Throughout the performance he whistled painfully.

Wesson regarded him with disfavor. "That looks damned exciting," he said. He reserved his more polished periods for use in public. "What are you playing at?"

ing at?"
"Wha—a—a'?" said Spennie abstractedly, dealing another card.

"Oh, don't sit there looking like a frog," said Wesson irritably. "Talk, man."

"What's the matter? What do you want? Hello, I've done it. No, I haven't. No luck at all. Haven't brought up a demon all day."

He gathered up the cards, and began to shuffle. "Ah, lov," he sang sentimentally, with a vacant eye on the roof of the summerhouse, "could I bot tell thee how moch—"

"Oh, stop it!" said Wesson.

"You seem depressed, laddie, What's the matter? Ah, lov', could I bot tell thee——"

"Spennie, who's this fellow Pitt?"
"Jimmy Pitt? Pal of mine. One of the absolute. Ay, nutty to the core, good my lord. Ah, lov', could I bot tell——"

"Where did you meet him?"

"London. Why?"

"He and your sister seem pretty good

friends."

"I shouldn't wonder. Knew each other out in America. Bridge, bridge, ber-ridge, a capital game for two. Shuffle and cut and deal away, and let the lo-oser pay-ah. Ber-ridge—"
"Well, let's have a game, then. Any-

"Well, let's have a game, then. Anything for something to do. Curse this rain! We shall be cooped up here till

dinner at this rate."

"Double dummy's a frightfully rotten game," said Spennie. "Ever played picquet? I could teach it to you in

five minutes.'

A look of almost awe came into Wesson's face, the look of one who sees a miracle performed before his eyes. For years he had been using all the large stock of diplomacy at his command to induce callow youths to play picquet

with him, and here was this admirable young man, this pearl among young men, positively offering to teach him It was too much happiness. the game. What had he done to deserve this? He felt as a toil-worn lion might have felt if an antelope, instead of making its customary bee line for the horizon, had expressed a friendly hope that it would be found tender and inserted its head between his jaws.

"I-it's very good of you. I shouldn't

mind being shown the idea.

He listened attentively while Spennie explained at some length the principles which govern the game of picquet. Every now and then he asked a question. It was evident that he was beginning to grasp the idea of the game.

"What exactly is repicquing?" he

asked, as Spennie paused.

"It's like this," said Spennie, return-

ing to his lecture.

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Yes, I see now," said the neophyte. They began playing. Spennie, as was only to be expected in a contest between teacher and student, won the first two hands. Wesson won the next.

"I've got the hang of it all right, now," he said complacently. "It's a simple sort of game. Make it more exciting, don't you think, if we played for something?"

"All right," said Spennie slowly, "if

He would not have suggested it him-fault if the winning of a hand should have given the fellow the impression that he knew all that there was to be known about picquet. Of course, picquet was a game where skill was practically bound to win. Butall, Wesson had plenty of money. He could afford it.

"All right," said Spennie again.

"How much?"

"Something fairly moderate. Ten

bob a hundred?"

There is no doubt that Spennie ought at this suggestion to have corrected the novice's notion that ten shillings a hundred was fairly moderate. He knew that it was possible for a poor player to

lose four hundred points in a twentyminute game, and usual for him to lose two hundred. But he let the thing go.

"Very well," he said.

Twenty minutes later, Mr. Wesson was looking somewhat ruefully at the score sheet. "I owe you eighteen shil-lings," he said. "Shall I pay you, now, or shall we settle up in a lump after we've finished?"

"What about stopping now?" said

Spennie. "It's quite fine out."

"No, let's go on. I've nothing to do till dinner, and I'm sure you haven't."

Spennie's conscience made one last effort. "You'd much better stop, you know, Wesson, really," he said. "You can lose a frightful lot at this game."

"My dear Spennie," said Wesson stiffly, "I can look after myself, thanks. Of course, if you think you are risking

too much, by all means-"Oh, if you don't mind," said Spennie, outraged, "I'm only too frightfully pleased. Only, remember I warned you."

"I'll bear it in mind. By the way, before we start, care to make it a sov-

ereign a hundred?"

Spennie could not afford to play picquet for a sovereign a hundred, or anything like it; but after his adversary's innuendo it was impossible for a young gentleman of spirit to admit the humiliating fact. He nodded.

"It's about time, I fancy," said Mr. Wesson, looking at his watch an hour later, "that we were going in to dress for dinner."

Spennie made no reply. He was

wrapped in thought.

"Let's see, that's twenty pounds you owe me, isn't it?" continued Mr. Wesson. "No hurry, of course. Any time you like. Shocking bad luck you had."

They went out into the rose garden. "Jolly everything smells after the rain," said Mr. Wesson. "Freshened

everything up.

Spennie did not appear to have noticed it. He seemed to be thinking of something else. His air was pensive and abstracted.

# CHAPTER XIII.

The emotions of a man who has just proposed and been accepted are complex and overwhelming. A certain stunned sensation is perhaps predominant. Blended with this is relief, the relief of a general who has brought a difficult campaign to a successful end, or of a member of a forlorn hope who finds that the danger is over, and he is still alive. To this must be added a newly born sense of magnificence, of finding oneself to be, without having known it, the devil of a fellow. We have dimly suspected, perhaps, from time to time that we were something rather out of the ordinary run of men, but there has always been a haunting fear that this view was to be attributed to a personal bias in our own favor. When, however, our suspicion is sud-denly confirmed by the only judge for whose opinion we have the least respect, our bosom heaves with complacency, and the world has nothing more to

With some accepted suitors there is an alloy of apprehension in the metal of their happiness; and the strain of an engagement sometimes brings with it even a faint shadow of regret. "She makes me buy new clothes," one swain, in the third quarter of his engagement, was overheard to moan to a friend. "Two new ties only yesterday." He seemed to be debating within himself whether human nature could stand the strain.

But, whatever tragedies may cloud the end of the period, its beginning at least is bathed in sunshine. Jimmy, regarding his lathered face in the glass as he dressed for dinner that night, called himself the luckiest man on earth, and wondered if he were worthy of such happiness. Thinking it over, he came to the conclusion that he was not, but that all the same he meant to have

No doubt distressed him. It might have occurred to him that the relations between Mr. McEachern and himself offered a very serious bar to his prospects; but in his present frame of mind

he declined to consider the existence of the ex-constable at all. In a world that contained Molly there was no room for other people. They were not in the

picture. They did not exist.

There are men in the world who, through long custom, can find themselves engaged without any particular whirl of emotion. King Solomon probably belonged to this class; and even Henry the Eighth must have become a trifle blasé in time. But to the average man, the novice, the fact of being accepted seems to divide existence into two definite parts, before and after. A sensitive conscience goads some into compiling a full and unexpurgated autobiography, the edition limited to one copy, which is presented to the lady most interested. Some men find a melancholy pleasure in these confessions. They like to draw the girl of their affections aside and have a long, cozy chat about what scoundrels they were before they met her.

But, after all, the past is past and cannot be altered, and it is to be supposed that, whatever we may have done in that checkered period, we intend to behave ourselves for the future. So,

why harp on it?

Jimmy acted upon this plan. Many men in his place, no doubt, would have steered the conversation skillfully to the subject of the eighth commandment, and then said: "Talking about stealing, did I ever tell you that I was a burglar myself for about six years?" Jimmy was reticent. All that was over, he told himself. He had given it up. He had buried the past. Why exhume it? It did not occur to him to confess his New York crimes to Molly any more than to tell her that, when seven, he had been caned for stealing jam.

These things had happened to a man of the name of Jimmy Pitt, it was true. But it was not the Jimmy Pitt who had proposed to Molly in the canoe on

The vapid and irreflective reader may jump to the conclusion that Jimmy was a casuist, and ought to have been ashamed of himself.

He will be perfectly right.

On the other hand, one excuse may be urged in his favor. His casuistry imposed upon himself.

To Jimmy, shaving, there entered, in the furtive manner habitual to that unreclaimed buccaneer, Spike Mullins.

"Say, Mr. Chames," he said. "Well," said Jimmy, "and how goes the world with young Lord Fitz Mullins? Spike, have you ever been best man?"

"On your way! What's that?"

"Best man at a wedding. Chap who stands by the bridegroom with a hand on the scruff of his neck to see that he goes through with it. Fellow who looks after everything, crowds the crisp banknotes onto the clergyman after the ceremony, and then goes off and marries the first bridesmaid, and lives happily ever after."
"I ain't got no use for gettin' mar-

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"Spike, the misogynist! You wait, Spike. Some day love will awake in your heart, and you'll start writing

poetry." "I'se not dat kind of mug, Mr. Chames," protested Spike. "Dere was a goil, dough. Only I was never her

steady. And she married one of de odder boys."

"Why didn't you knock him down and carry her off?"

"He was de lightweight champion of de woild."

"That makes a difference, doesn't it? But away with melancholy, Spike! I'm feeling as if somebody had given me Broadway for a birthday present."

"Youse to de good," agreed Spike.
"Well, any news? Keggs all right?

How are you getting on?"
"Mr. Chames." Spike sank his voice to a whisper. "Dat's what I chased meself here about. Dere's a mug down in de soivant's hall what's a detective. Yes, dat's right, if I ever saw one."

"What makes you think so?" "On your way, Mr. Chames! Can't I tell? I could pick out a fly cop out of a bunch of a thousand. Sure. Dis mug's vally to Sir Thomas, dat's him. But he ain't no vally. He's come to see dat no one don't get busy wit de jools. Say, what do you t'ink of dem jools, Mr. Chames?"

"Finest I ever saw."

"Yes, dat's right. De limit, ain't dey? Ain't youse really-

"No, Spike, I am not, thank you very much for inquiring. I'm never going to touch a jewel again unless I've paid for it and got the receipt in my pocket."

Spike shuffled despondently, "All the same," said Jimmy, "I shouldn't give yourself away to this de-If he tries pumping you at tective. all, give him the frozen face.

'Sure. But he ain't de only one." "What, more detectives? They'll have to put up 'house full' boards at this rate. Who's the other?"

"De mug what came dis afternoon. Ole man McEachern brought him. seed Miss Molly talking to him.

"The chap from the inn? Why, that's an old New York friend of McEachern's."

"Anyhow, Mr. Chames, he's a sleut'. I can tell 'em by deir eyes and deir feet, and de whole of dem."

An idea came into Jimmy's mind. "I see," he said. "Our friend Mc-Eachern has got him in to spy on us. I might have known he'd be up to

something like that." "Dat's right, Mr. Chames."

"Of course you may be mistaken." "Not me, Mr. Chames."

"Anyhow, I shall be seeing him at dinner. I can get talking to him after-ward. I shall soon find out what his

game is." For the moment, Molly was forgotten. The old reckless spirit was carrying him away. This thing was a delib-erate challenge. He had been on pa-He had imagined that his word was all that McEachern had to rely on. But if the policeman had been working secretly against him all this time, his parole was withdrawn automatically. The thought that, if he did nothing, McEachern would put it down complacently to the vigilance of his detective and his own astuteness in engaging him stung Jimmy. His six years of bur-glary had given him an odd sort of professional pride. "I've half a mind,"

he said softly. The familiar expression on his face was not lost on Spike.

"To try for de jools, Mr. Chames?"

he asked eagerly.

His words broke the spell. Molly resumed her place. The hard look died out of Jimmy's eyes.
"No," he said. "Not that. It can't

be done."

"Yes, it could, Mr. Chames. Dead easy. I've been up to de room, and I've seen de box what de jools is put in at night. We could get at them easy as pullin' de plug out of a bottle. Say, dis is de softest proposition, dis house. Look what I got dis afternoon, Mr. Chames.'

He plunged his hand into his pocket, and drew it out again. As he unclosed his fingers, Jimmy caught the gleam of

precious stones.

He started as one who sees snakes in the grass.

"What the-" he gasped.

Spike was looking at his treasure-trove with an air of affectionate proprietorship.

"Where on earth did you get those?"

asked Jimmy.

"Out of one of de rooms. Dey be-longed to one of de loidies. It was de easiest old t'ing ever, Mr. Chames, I went in when dere was nobody about, and dere dey were on de toible. I never butted into anyt'ing so soft, Mr. Chames.'

"Spike."

"Yes, Mr. Chames?"

"Do you remember the room you took them from?"

"Sure. It was de foist on de---" "Then just listen to me for a moment. When we're at dinner, you've got to go to that room and put those things back-all of them, mind youjust where you found them. Do you understand?"

Spike's jaw had fallen.
"Put dem back, Mr. Chames!" he

"Every single one of them."

"Mr. Chames!" said Spike plain-

"You'll bear it in mind? Directly dinner has begun, every one of those things goes back where it belongs.

"Very well, Mr. Chames."

The dejection in his voice would have moved the sternest to pity. Gloom had enveloped Spike's spirit. The sunlight had gone out of his life.

# CHAPTER XIV.

Spennie Blunt, meanwhile, was not feeling happy. Out of his life, too, had the sunshine gone. His assets amounted to one pound seven and fourpence, and he owed twenty pounds. He had succeeded, after dinner, in borrowing five pounds from Jimmy, who was in the mood when he would have lent five pounds to anybody who asked for it, but beyond that he had had no successes in the course of a borrowing tour among the inmates of the abbey.

In the seclusion of his bedroom, he sat down to smoke a last cigarette and think the thing over in all its aspects. He could see no way out of his difficulties. The thought had something of the dull persistency of a toothache. It refused to leave him. If only this had happened at Oxford, he knew of twenty kindly men who would have rallied round him, and placed portions of their father's money at his disposal. this was July. He would not see Oxford again for months. And, in the meantime, Wesson would be pressing for his money.

"Oh, damn!" he said.

He had come to this conclusion for the fiftieth time, when the door opened, and his creditor appeared in person. To Spennie, he looked like the embodiment of Fate, a sort of male Nemesis.

"I want to have a talk with you, Spennie," said Wesson, closing the

"Well?"

Wesson lit a cigarette, and threw the match out of the window before reply-

"Look here, Spennie," he said, "I want to marry Miss McEachern."

Spennie was in no mood to listen to the love affairs of other men.

"Oh!" he said.

"Yes. And I want you to help me." "Help you?"

"You must have a certain amount of influence with her. She's your sister."

"Stepsister." "Same thing."

"Well, anyhow, it's no good coming to me. Nobody's likely to make Molly do a thing unless she wants to. couldn't, if I tried for a year. We're good pals, and all that, but she'd shut me up like a knife if I went to her and said I wanted her to marry some one."
"Not being a perfect fool," said Wes-

son impatiently, "I don't suggest that

you should do that."

"What's the idea, then?" "You can easily talk about me to her. Praise me, and so on."

Spennie's eyes opened wide.

"Praise you? How?"
"Thanks," said Wesson, with a laugh. "If you can't think of any admirable qualities in me, you'd better invent

"I should feel such a silly ass."

"That would be a new experience for you, wouldn't it? And then you can arrange it so that I shall get chances of talking to her, You can bring us together.

Spennie's eyes became rounder.

"You seem to have mapped out quite a programme for me.'

'She'll listen to you. You can help me a lot."

"Can I?"

Wesson threw away his cigarette. "And there's another thing," he said. "You can queer that fellow Pitt's game. She's always with him now. You must get her away from him. Run him down to her. And get him out of

this place as soon as possible. invited him here. He doesn't expect to stop here indefinitely, I suppose? If you left, he'd have to, too. What you must do is to go back to London directly after the theatricals are over. He'll have to go with you. Then you can drop him in London and come

It is improbable that Wesson was blind to certain blemishes which could have been urged against this ingenious

scheme by a critic with a nice sense of the honorable; but, in his general conduct of life, as in his play at cards, he was accustomed to ignore the rules when he felt disposed to do so. He proceeded to mention in detail a few of the things which he proposed to call upon his ally to do. . A delicate pink flush might have been seen to spread over Spennie's face. He began to look like an angry rabbit. He had not a great deal of pride in his composition, but the thought of the ignominious rôle which Wesson was sketching out for him stirred what he had to its shallow depths.

Talking on, Wesson managed with his final words to add the last straw.

"Of course," he said, "that money you lost to me at picquet-What Ten? was it? Twenty? pounds, wasn't it? Well, we could look on that as canceled, of course. That will be all right."

Spennie exploded.

"Will it?" he cried, pink to the ears. "Will it, by George? I'll pay you every frightful penny of it before the end of the week. What do you take me for, I should like to know?"

'A fool, if you refuse my offer." "I've a fearfully good mind to give

you a most frightful kicking."
"I shouldn't try, Spennie, if I were you. It's not the form of indoor game at which you'd shine. Better stick to picquet.

"If you think I can't pay you your

rotten money-

"I do. But if you can, so much the better. Money is always useful."

"I may be a fool in some ways-"You understate it, my dear Spen-

"But I'm not a cad."

"You're getting quite rosy, Spennie. Wrath is good for the complexion."

"And if you think you can bribe me to do your dirty work, you never made a bigger mistake in your life."

"Yes, I did," said Wesson, "when I thought you had some glimmerings of intelligence. But if it gives you any pleasure to behave like the juvenile lead in a melodrama, by all means do.

Personally, I shouldn't have thought the game would be worth the candle. Your keen sense of honor, I understand you to say, will force you to pay your debt. It's an expensive luxury nowadays, Spennie. You mentioned the end of the week, I believe? That will suit me admirably. But if you change your mind, my offer is still open. Good night, Galahad."

## CHAPTER XV.

For pure discomfort there are few things in the world that can compete with the final rehearsals of an amateur theatrical performance at a country house. Every day the atmosphere becomes more and more heavily charged with restlessness and irritability. The producer of the piece, especially if he is also the author of it, develops a sort of intermittent insanity. He plucks at his mustache, if he has one; at his hair, if he has not. He mutters to himself. He gives vent to occasional despairing The soothing suavity which marked his demeanor in the earlier re-hearsals disappears. He no longer says with a winning smile: "Splendid, old man; splendid. Couldn't be better. But I think we'll take that over just once more, if you don't mind. You missed out a few rather good lines, and you forgot to give Miss Robinson her cue for upsetting the flowerpot." Instead, he rolls his eyes and snaps out: "Once more, please. This'll never do. this rate we might just as well cut out the show altogether. For Heaven's sake, Brown, do try and remember your lines. It's no good having the best part in the piece if you go and forget everything you've got to say. What's that? All right on the night? No, it won't be all right on the night. And another thing. You must remember to say, 'How calm and peaceful the morning is,' or how on earth do you think Miss Robinson is going to know when to upset that flowerpot? Now, then, once more; and do pull yourself together this time." After which the scene is sulkily resumed by the now thoroughly irritated actors; and conversation, when the parties concerned meet subsequently, is cold and strained,

Matters had reached this stage at the abbey. Everybody was thoroughly tired of the piece, and, but for the thought of the disappointment whichpresumably-would rack the neighboring nobility and gentry if it were not to be produced, would have resigned without a twinge of regret. People who had schemed to get the best and longest parts were wishing now that they had been content with First Footman or Giles, a villager.

"I'll never run an amateur show again as long as I live," confided Charteris to Jimmy, almost tearfully the night before the production. "It's not good enough. Most of them aren't word-perfect yet. And we've just had the dress rehearsal!"

"It'll be all right on-"

"Oh, don't say it'll be all right on the

night.'

I wasn't going to," said Jimmy. "I was going to say it'll be all right after the night. People will soon forget how badly the thing went."

"You're a nice, comforting sort of man, aren't you?" said Charteris.
"Why worry?" said Jimmy. "If you go on like this, it'll be Westminster Abbey for you in your prime. You'll

be getting brain fever."

Jimmy himself was feeling particularly cheerful. He was deriving a keen amusement at present from the manœuvres of Mr. Samuel Galer, of New York. This lynx-eyed man, having been instructed by Mr. McEachern to watch Jimmy, was doing so with a pertinacity which would have made a man with the snowiest of consciences suspicious. If Jimmy went to the billiard room after dinner, Mr. Galer was there to keep him company. If, during the course of the day, he had occasion to fetch a handkerchief or a cigarette case from his bedroom, he was sure, on emerging, to stumble upon Mr. Galer in the corridor. The employees of Wragge's Detective Agency, Ltd., believed in earning their salaries. Occasionally, after these encounters, Jimmy would come upon Sir Thomas Blunt's valet,

the other man in whom Spike's trained eye had discerned the distinguishing trait of the detective. He was usually somewhere round the corner at these moments, and, when collided with, apologized with great politeness. It tickled Jimmy to think that both these giant brains should be so greatly exercised on his account.

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Spennie, meanwhile, had been doing quite an unprecedented amount of thinking. Quite an intellectual pallor had begun to appear on his normally pink cheeks. He had discovered the profound truth that it is one thing to talk about paying one's debts, another actually to do it, and that this is more particularly the case when we owe twenty pounds and possess but six pounds seven shillings and fourpence. Spennie was acutely conscious of the fact that, if he could not follow up his words to Wesson with actual coin, the result would be something of an anticlimax. Somehow or other he would have to get the money-and at once. The difficulty was that no one seemed at all inclined to lend it to him.

There is a good deal to be said against stealing as a habit; but it cannot be denied that, in certain circumstances, it offers an admirable solution of a difficulty, and if the penalties were not so exceedingly unpleasant, it is probable that it would become far more

fashionable than it is.

Spennie's mind did not turn immediately to this outlet from his embarrassment. He had never stolen before, and it did not occur to him directly to do so now. There is a conservative strain in all of us. But gradually, as it was borne in upon him that it was the only course possible, unless he applied to his stepfather-a task for which his courage was not sufficient-he found himself contemplating the possibility of having to secure the money by unlawful means. By lunch time, on the morning of the day fixed for the theatricals, he had decided definitely to do so. By dinner time he had fixed upon the object of his attentions.

With a vague idea of keeping the thing in the family, he had resolved to

make his raid upon Sir Thomas Blunt. Somehow it did not seem so bad rob-

bing one's relatives.

A man's first crime is, as a rule, a shockingly amateurish affair. Now and then, it is true, we find beginners forging with the accuracy of old hands or breaking into houses with the finish of experts. But these are isolated cases. The average tyro lacks generalship altogether. Spennie may be cited as a typical novice. It did not strike him that inquiries might be instituted by Sir Thomas, when he found his money gone, and that Wesson, finding a man whom he knew to be impecunious suddenly in possession of twenty pounds, might have suspicions. His mind was entirely filled with the thought of getting the money. There was no room in it for any other reflection.

His plan was simple. Sir Thomas, he knew, always carried a good deal of money with him. It was unlikely that he kept this on his person in the evening. A man to whom the set of his clothes is as important as it was to Sir Thomas, does not carry a pocket-book full of banknotes when he is dressed for dinner. He would leave it somewhere, reasoned Spennie. Where, he asked himself. The answer was easy. In his dressing room. Spennie's

plan of campaign was complete.

The theatricals began at half-past eight. The audience had been hustled into their seats, happier than is usual in such circumstances from the rumor that the proceedings were to terminate with an informal dance. The abbey was singularly well constructed for such a purpose. There was plenty of room, and a sufficiency of retreat for those who sat out, in addition to a conservatory large enough to have married off half the couples in the county. The audience was in an excellent humor, and the monologue, the first item of the programme, was received with a warmth which gave Charteris, whom rehearsals had turned into a pessimist, a faint hope that the main item on the programme might not be the complete failure it had promised to be.

Spennie's idea had been to get

through his burglarious specialty during the monologue, when his absence would not be noticed. It might be that if he disappeared later in the evening people would wonder what had become

He lurked apart till the last of the audience had taken their seats. As he was passing through the hall, a hand fell on his shoulder. Conscience makes cowards of us all. Spennie bit his tongue and leaped three inches into the air.

"Hello, Charteris!" he said gasping-

ly. "Spennie, my boyhood's only friend," said Charteris, "where are you off to?" "What—what do you mean? I was just going upstairs."

"Then don't. You're wanted. Our prompter can't be found. I want you to take his place till he blows in. Come

The official prompter arrived at the end of the monologue with the remark that he had been having a bit of a smoke in the garden and his watch had gone wrong. Leaving him to discuss the point with Charteris, Spennie slipped quietly away, and flitted up the stairs toward Sir Thomas' dressing room. At the door, he stopped and listened. There was no sound. The house might have been deserted. He opened the door, and switched on the electric light.

Fortune was with him. On the dressing table, together with a bunch of keys and some small change, lay a brown leather pocketbook. Evidently Sir Thomas did not share Lady Blunt's impression that the world was waiting for a chance to rob him as soon as his

back was turned.

Spennie opened the pocketbook, and counted the contents. There were two ten-pound notes, and four of five pounds.

He took a specimen of each variety, replaced the pocketbook, and crept out of the door.

Then he walked rapidly down the corridor to his own room.

Just as he reached it, he received a shock only less severe than the former

one from the fact that this time no hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Spennie!" cried a voice.

He turned, to see Molly. She wore the costume of the stage milkmaid. Coming out of her room after dressing for her part, she had been in time to see Spennie emerge through Sir Thomas' door with a look on his face furtive enough to have made any jury bring in a verdict of guilty on any count without further evidence. She did not know what he had been doing; but she was very certain that it was something which he ought to have left undone.

"Er-hullo, Molly!" said Spennie

bonelessly.

"What were you doing in Uncle

Thomas' room, Spennie?"
"Nothing. I was just looking round."

"Just looking round?"
"That's all."

Molly was puzzled.

"Why did you look like that when you came out?"

"Like what?" "So guilty.

"Guilty! What are you talking about?"

Molly suddenly saw light, "Spennie," she said, "what were you putting in your pocket as you came

"Putting in my pocket!" said Spennie, rallying with the desperation of one fighting a lost cause. "What do you mean?

"You were putting something."

Another denial was hovering on Spennie's lips, when, in a flash, he saw what he had not seen before, the cloud of suspicion which must hang over him when the loss of the notes was discovered. Sir Thomas would remember that he had tried to borrow money from him. Wesson would wonder how he had become possessed of twenty pounds. And Molly had actually seen him coming out of the room, putting something in his pocket.

He threw himself at the mercy of

the court.

"It's like this, Molly," he said. And, having prefaced his narrative with the sound remark that he had been a fool, he gave her a summary of recent events.

"I see," said Molly. "And you must pay him at once?"

By the end of the week. We hadwe had a bit of a row."

"What about?"

"Oh, nothing," said Spennie. "Anyhow I told him I'd pay him by Saturday, and I don't want to have to climb down."

"Of course not. Jimmy shall lend

you the money."

"Who? Jimmy Pitt?"

"Yes."

"Yes."
"But, I say, look here, Molly. I mean, I've been to him already. lent me a fiver. He might kick if I tried to touch him again so soon.'

"I'll ask him for it."

"But, look here, Molly---" "Jimmy and I are engaged, Spen-

"What! Not really? I say, I'm frightfully pleased. He's one of the best. I'm fearfully glad. Why, that's absolutely topping. It'll be all right. I'll sweat to pay him back. I'll save out of my allowance. I can easily do it if I cut out a few things and don't go about so much. You're a frightfully good sort, Molly. I say, will you ask him to-night? I want to pay Wesson first thing to-morrow morning."

"Very well. You'd better give me those notes, Spennie. I'll put them back."

The amateur cracksman handed over his loot, and retired toward the stairs. Molly could hear him going down them three at a time, in a whirl of relief and She went to Sir good resolutions. Thomas' room, and replaced the notes. Having done this, she could not resist the temptation to examine herself in the glass for a few moments. Then she turned away, switched off the light, and was just about to leave the room when a soft footstep in the passage outside came to her ears.

She shrank back. She felt a curiously guilty sensation, as if she had been in the room with criminal rather than benevolent intentions. Her motives in being where she was were excellent-but she would wait till this person had passed before coming out into the passage.

Then it came to her with a shock that the person was not going to pass. The footsteps halted outside the door.

There was a curtain at her side, behind which hung certain suits of Sir Thomas'. She stepped noiselessly behind this.

The footsteps passed on into the

room.

# CHAPTER XVI.

Jimmy had gone up to his room to put on the costume he was to wear in the first act at about the time when Spennie was being seized upon by Charteris to act as prompter. As he moved toward the stairs, a square-cut figure appeared.

It was the faithful Galer.

There was nothing in his appearance to betray the detective to the unskilled eye, but years of practice had left Spike with a sort of sixth sense as regarded the force. He could pierce the subtlest disguise. Jimmy had this gift in an almost equal degree, and it had not needed Mr. Galer's constant shadowing of himself to prove to Jimmy the correctness of Spike's judgment. looked at the representative of Wragge's Detective Agency, Ltd., as he stood before him now, taking in his every detail: the square, unintelligent face; the badly cut clothes; the clumsy heels; the enormous feet.

"And this," he said to himself, "is the man McEachern thinks capable of tying my hands!" There were moments when the spectacle of Mr. Galer filled Jimmy with an odd sort of fury, a kind of hurt professional pride. The feeling that this espionage was a direct challenge enraged him. Behind this clumsy watcher he saw always the self-satisfied figure of Mr. McEachern. He seemed to hear him chuckling to

himself.

"If it wasn't for Molly," he said to himself, "I'd teach McEachern a lesson, I'm trying to hold myself in, and he sets these fool detectives onto me. I shouldn't mind if he'd chosen somebody who knew the rudiments of the game,

but Galer! Galer!

"Well, Mr. Galer," he said, aloud, "you aren't trying to escape, are you? You're coming in to see the show, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes," said the detective. "Jest wanted to go upstairs for 'alf a minute. You coming, too?"

"I was going to dress," said Jimmy, as they went up. "See you later," added, at the door. "Hope you'll like the show."

He went into his room. Mr. Galer

passed on.

Jimmy had finished dressing, and had picked up a book to occupy the ten minutes before he would be needed downstairs, when there burst into the room Spike Mullins, in a state of obvious excitement.

"Gee, Mr. Chames!"

"Hello, Spike."

Spike went to the door, opened it, and looked up and down the passage.

"Mr. Chames," he said, in a whisper, shutting the door, "there's bin do-in's to-night for fair. Me coco's still buzzin'. Say, I was to Sir Thomas' dressin' room—"

"What! What were you doing

Spike looked somewhat embarrassed. He grinned apologetically, and shuffled his feet.

"I've got dem, Mr. Chames," he said.

"Got them? Got what?"

He plunged his hand in his pocket, and drew forth a glittering mass. Jimmy's jaw dropped as he gazed at

Lady Blunt's rope of pearls.

"Two hundred t'ousand plunks," murmured Spike, gazing lovingly at them. "I says to myself, Mr. Chames ain't got no time to be gettin' after dem himself. He's too busy dese days wit' jollyin' along the swells. So it's up to me, I says, 'cos Mr. Chames'll be tickled to deat', all right, all right, if we can git away wit' dem. So I-

Jimmy gave tongue with an energy which amazed his faithful follower.

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"Spike! You lunatic! Didn't I tell you there was nothing doing when you wanted to take those things the other

Sure, Mr. Chames, But dose was little dinky t'ings. Dese poils is boids,

for fair."

"Good heavens, Spike, you must be mad. Can't you see-Oh, Lord! Directly the loss of those pearls is discovered, we shall have those detectives after us in a minute. Didn't you know they had been watching us?"

An involuntary chuckle escaped

Spike.
"'Scuse me, Mr. Chames, but dat's Listen. funny about dem sleut's. Li Dey's bin an' arrest each other."

"What!" "Dat's right. Dey had a scrap in de dark, each t'inking de odder was after de jools, an' not knowin' dey was bote sleut's, an' now one of dem's bin an' taken de odder off, an' locked him in de cellar."

"What on earth do you mean?" Spike giggled at the recollection.

"Listen, Mr. Chames, it's dis way. I'm in de dressin' room, chasin' around wit' dis lantern here for de jool box" -he produced from his other pocket a small bicycle lamp-"and just as I gets a line on it, gee! I hears a footstep comin' down de passage straight for de door. Was to de bad? Dat's right. Gee, I says to m'self, here's one of de sleut' guys what's bin an' got wise to me, and he's comin' in to put de grip on me. So I gets up, an' I blows out de lantern, and I stands dere in de dark, waitin' for him to come in. And den I'm going to get busy before he can see who I am, and jolt him one on de point, and den, while he's down and out, chase meself for de soivants'

"Yes?" said Jimmy.

"Well, dis guy, he gets to de door, and opens it, and I'm just goin' to butt in, when dere suddenly jumps out from de room on de odder side de passage anodder guy, and gets de rapid strangleholt on dis foist mug. Say, wouldn't dat make you wonder was you on your feet or your coco?"

"Go on. What happened, then?" "Dev begins to scrap good and hard in de dark. Dey couldn't see me, and I couldn't see dem, but I could hear dem bumpin' about an' sluggin' each odder, all right, all right. an' by one of dem puts de odder to de bad, so dat he goes down and takes de count; an' den I hears a click. And I know what dat is. One of de guys has put de irons on de odder guy. Den I hears him strike a light-I'd turned de switch what lights up de passage before I got into de roomand den he says, 'Ah,' he says, 'got youse, have I? Not the boid I expected, but you'll do.' I knew his voice. It was dat mug what calls himself

"I suppose I'm the bird he expected," said Jimmy. "Well?"

"De odder mug was too busy catchin' up wit' his breat' to shoot it back swift, but after he's bin doin' de deep breathin' stunt for a while, he says, 'You mutt,' he says, 'youse to de bad. You've made a break, you have.' He put it different, but dat's what he meant. Den he says that he's a sleut', too. Does de Galer mug give him de glad eye? Not on your life. He says dat dat's de woist tale that's ever bin handed to him. De odder mug says, 'I'm Sir Tummas' vally,' he says. 'Aw, cut it out,' says Galer. 'Sure youse ain't Sir Tummas himself?' 'Show me to him,' says de foist guy, 'den you'll see.' 'Not on your life,' says Galer. 'What! Butt in among de swells what's enjoyin' themselves and spoil deir evenin' by showin' dem a face like yours? To de woods! It's youse for de coal cellar, me man, and we'll see what youse has got to say afterward. G'wan!' And off dey went. And I lit me lantern again, got de jools, and chased meself here.'

Jimmy stretched out his hand,
"All very exciting," he said. "And
now you'll just hand me those pearls,
and I'll seize the opportunity while the
coast is clear to put them back where
they belong."

Only for a moment did Spike hesitate. Then he pulled out the jewels, and placed them in Jimmy's hand. Mr. Chames was Mr. Chames, and what he said went. But his demeanor was tragic, telling eloquently of hopes blighted.

Jimmy took the necklace with a thrill. He was an expert in jewels, and a fine gem affected him much as a fine picture affects the artistic. He went to the light, and inspected them gloatingly.

As he did so, he uttered a surprised exclamation. He ran the jewels through his fingers. He scrutinized them again, more closely this time.

Then he turned to Spike, with a curious smile.

"You'd better be going downstairs," he said. "I'll just run along and replace them. Where is the box?"

"It's on de floor against de wall, near de window, Mr. Chames."

"Good. Better give me that lamp."
There was no one in the passage.
He raced softly along it to Sir Thomas
Blunt's dressing room,

He lit his lamp, and found the box without difficulty. Dropping the necklace in, he closed down the lid.

"They'll want a new lock, I'm afraid," he said. "However!"

He rose to his feet.

"Jimmy!" said a startled voice.

He whipped round. The light of the lamp fell on Molly, standing, pale and open-eyed, beside the curtain by the door.

# CHAPTER XVII.

Pressed, rigid, against the wall behind her curtain, Molly had listened in utter bewilderment to the sounds of strife in the passage outside. The half-heard conversation between the detectives had done nothing toward a solution of the mystery. Galer's voice she thought she recognized as one that she had heard before; but she could not identify it.

When the detectives had passed away together down the corridor, she had imagined that the adventure was at an end and that she was at liberty to emerge—cautiously—from her hiding place and follow them downstairs. She had stretched out a hand, to draw the curtain aside, when she caught sight of the yellow ray of the lamp on the floor, and shrank back again. As she did so, she heard the sound of breathing. Somebody was still in the room.

Her mystification deepened. She had supposed that the tale of visitors to the dressing room was complete with the two who had striven in the passage.

Yet here was another.

She strained her ears to catch a sound. For a while she heard nothing. Then came a voice that she knew well; and, abandoning concealment, she came out into the room, and found Jimmy kneeling on the floor beside the rifled jewel box,

For a full minute they stood staring at each other, without a word. The light of the lamp hurt Molly's eyes. She put up a hand, to shade them. The silence was oppressive. It seemed to Molly that they had been standing

like this for years.

Jimmy had not moved. There was something in his attitude which filled Molly with a vague fear. In the shadow behind the lamp, he looked shapeless and inhuman.

"What are you doing here?" he said at last, in a harsh, unnatural voice.

"T\_\_\_\_\_\_"

She stopped.

"You're hurting my eyes," she said.
"I'm sorry. I didn't think. Is that better?"

He turned the light from her face. Something in his voice and the apologetic haste with which he moved the lamp seemed to relax the strain of the situation. The feeling of stunned surprise began to leave her. She found herself thinking coherently again.

The relief was but momentary. Why was Jimmy in the room at that time? Why had he a lamp? What had he been doing? The questions shot from her brain like sparks from an an-

vil.

The darkness began to tear at her

nerves. She felt along the wall for the switch, and flooded the room with hu

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light.

Jimmy laid down the lantern, and stood for a moment, undecided. He looked at Molly, and suddenly there came over him an overwhelming desire to tell her everything. He had tried to stifle his conscience, to assure himself that the old days were over, and that there was no need to refer to them. And for a while he had imposed upon himself. But lately the falseness of his position had come home to him. He could not allow her to marry him, in ignorance of what he had been. It would be a villainous thing to do. Often he had tried to tell her, but had failed. He saw that it must be done, here and now.

He lifted the lid of the jewel box, and dangled the necklace before her

eves.

She drew back.

"Jimmy! You were—stealing them?"
"No, I was putting them back."

"Putting them back?"

"Listen. I'm going to tell you the truth, Molly—I've been trying to for days, but I never had the pluck. I wasn't stealing this necklace, but for seven years I lived by this sort of thing."

"By---"

"By stealing. By breaking into houses and stealing. There. It isn't nice, is it? But it's the truth. And, whatever happens, I'm glad you know."
"Stealing!" said Molly slowly.

"You!"

He took a step forward, and laid his hand on her arm. She shrank away from him. His hand fell to his side like lead.

"Molly, do you hate me?"

"How could you?" she whispered.

"How could you?"

"Molly, I want to tell you a story. Are you listening? It's the story of a weak devil who was put up to fight the world, and wasn't strong enough for it. He got a bad start, and he never made it up. They sent him to school, the best school in the country; and he got expelled. Then they gave him a

hundred pounds, and told him to make out for himself. He was seventeen, then. Seventeen, mind you. And all he knew was a little Latin and Greek, a very little, and nothing else. And they sent him out to make his fortune."

He stopped.

"It will be much simpler to tell it in the first person," he said, with a short laugh. "I arrived in New York-I was seventeen, you will rememberwith ninety pounds in my pocket. It seemed illimitable wealth at the time. Two pounds was the most I had ever possessed before. I could not imagine its ever coming to an end. In dollars it seemed an inconceivable amount of money. I put up at the Waldorf. I remember, I took a cab there. I gave the man three dollars."

He laughed again.

"You can guess how long my ninety pounds lasted. Within a month I had begun to realize that my purse was shallower than I had thought. It occurred to me that work of some sort would be an advantage. I went round and tried to get some. My God! Remember, I was seventeen, and absolutely ignorant of every useful trade under the sun.'

"Go on. "One day I was lunching at the Quentin, when a man came and sat down at the same table, and we got into conversation. I had spent the morning answering want advertisements, and I was going to break my last twentydollar bill to pay for my lunch. I was in the frame of mind when I would have done anything, good or bad, that would have given me some money. The man was very friendly. After lunch, he took me off to his rooms. He had a couple of parlor rooms in Forty-fifth Street. Then he showed Forty-fifth Street. Then he showed his hand. He was a pretty scoundrel, but I didn't care. I didn't care for anything, except that there seemed to be money to be had from him. Honesty! Put a man in New York with nineteen dollars and a few cents in his pockets, and no friends, and see what happens! It's a hell for the poor, in New York. An iron, grinding city. It frightens you. It's so big and hard and cruel. It takes the fight out of you. I've felt it, and I know.'

He stopped, and gave a little shiver. Nine years had passed since that day, but a man who has all but gone under in a big city does not readily forget the nightmare horror of it.

"Stone-that was the man's namewas running a tapless wire-tapping game. You've read about the trick, I expect. Every one has known about it since Larry Summerfield was sent to Sing Sing. But it was new then. There are lots of ways of doing it. Stone's was to hire a room and fix it up to look like a branch of the Western Union Telegraph Company. He would bring men in there and introduce them to a man he called the manager of the branch, who was supposed to get racing results ten minutes before they were sent out to the pool rooms. The victim would put up the money for a bet, and Stone and his friends got it at once. Stone was looking for an assistant. He wanted a man who looked like a gentleman. To inspire confidence! I looked older than I was, and he took me on. It was a filthy business, but I was in a panic. I was with Stone eight months. Then I left him. It was too unsavoryeven for me.

"It was after that that I became a cracksman. I wanted money. It was no use hoping for work. I couldn't get it, and I couldn't have done it if I had got it. I was a pirate, and fit for nothing except piracy. One night I met a man in a Broadway rathskel-I knew him by sight. seen him about at places. 'You're with Stone, aren't you?' he said, after we had talked about racing and other things for a while. I stared at him in surprise. I was frightened, too. 'It's all right,' he said, 'I know all about Stone. You needn't be afraid of me. Aren't you with him?' 'I was,' I said. 'You left him? Why?' I told him. 'You seem a bright kid,' he said. 'Join me if you feel like it.' He was a cracksman. I never found out his real

name. He was always called Bob. A curious man. He had been at Harvard. and spoke half a dozen languages. I think he took to burglary from sheer craving for excitement. He used to speak of it as if it were an art. joined him, and he taught me all he knew. When he died-he was run over by a car-I went on with the thing. Then my uncle died, and I came back to England, rich.

"When I left the lawyer's office, I made up my mind that I would draw a line across my life. I swore I would never crack another crib. And when I met you I swore it again."

"And yet-

"No. It isn't as bad as you think. When I was in London I fell in with a man named Mullins, who used to work with me in the old days. He was starving, so I took him in, and brought him along here with me, to keep him out of mischief. To-night he came to me with this necklace. He had been in here, and stolen it. I took it from him, and came to put it back. You believe me, don't you, Molly?"

"Yes," said she simply. He came a step nearer.

"Molly, don't give me up. I know I've been a blackguard, but I swear that's all over now. I've drawn a line right through it. I oughtn't to have let myself love you. But I couldn't help it. I couldn't, dear. You won't give me up, will you? If you'd only take me in hand, you could make what you liked of me. I'd do anything for you. Any mortal thing you wanted. You can make me just anything you please. Will you try? Molly!"

He stopped. She held out both her

hands to him.

The next moment she had gone.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

With a wonderful feeling of lightheartedness, Jimmy turned once more to the jewel box. He picked up the lamp and switched off the electric light. He had dropped the necklace to the floor, and had knelt to recover it when the opening of the door, followed by

a blaze of light and a startled exclamation, brought him to his feet with a bound, blinking but alert.

In the doorway stood Sir Thomas Blunt. His face expressed the most lively astonishment. His bulging eyes were fixed upon the pearls in Jimmy's

"Good evening," said Jimmy pleas-

Sir Thomas stammered. It is a disquieting experience to find the floor of one's dressing room occupied by a bur-

"What-what-what-" said Sir

Thomas.

"Out with it," said Jimmy.

"What-

"I knew a man once who stam-mered," said Jimmy. "He used to chew dog biscuit while he was speaking. It cured him. Besides being nu-

"You-you blackguard!" said Sir

Thomas.

Jimmy placed the pearls carefully on the dressing table. Then he turned to Sir Thomas, with his hands in the pockets of his coat. It was a tight corner, but he had been in tighter in his time, and in this instance he fancied that he held a winning card. He found himself enjoying the interview.

"So-so it's you, is it?" said Sir

Thomas.

'Who told you?"

"So you're a thief," went on the

baronet viciously, "a low thief."
"Dash it all—I say, come now," protested Jimmy. "Not low. You may not know me, over here, but I've got a big American reputation. Ask any-

body. But-

"And, I say," added Jimmy, "I know you don't mean to be offensive, but I wish you wouldn't call me a thief. I'm a cracksman. There's a world of difference between the two branches of the profession. I mean, well, suppose you were an actor-manager, you wouldn't like to be called a super, would you? I mean—well, you see, don't you? An ordinary thief, for instance, would use violence in a case like this. Violence-except in extreme que The you T his ear The hen

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cases: I hope this won't be one of them-is contrary to cracksmen's eti-On the other hand, Thomas, I should like to say that I have you covered."

There was a pipe in the pocket of his coat. He thrust the stem of this earnestly against the lining. Thomas eyed the protuberance apprehensively, and turned a little pale.

"My gun, as you see, is in my pocket. It is loaded and cocked. It is pointing straight at you at the present moment, and my finger is on the trigger. I may add that I am a dead shot at a yard and a half. So I should recommend you not to touch that bell you are looking at."

Sir Thomas' hand wavered.

"Do, if you like, of course," said mmy agreeably. "In any case, I Jimmy agreeably. shan't fire to kill you. I shall just smash your knees. Beastly painful, but not fatal.'

He waggled the pipe suggestively. Sir Thomas blanched. His hand fell

to his side. "How are the theatricals going?" asked Jimmy. "Did you like the mon-

ologue?" Sir Thomas had backed away from the bell, but the retreat was merely for the convenience of the moment. He understood that it might be inconvenient to press the button just then; but he had recovered his composure by this time, and he saw that the game must be his. Jimmy was trapped, and

he hastened to make this clear to him. "How, may I ask," he said, "do you propose to leave the abbey?"

"I suppose they'll let me have the automobile," said Jimmy. "They can hardly ask me to walk. But I wasn't thinking of leaving just yet."

"You mean to stop!"

"Why not? It's a pretty place." "And what steps, if I may ask, do you imagine I shall take?"

"Waltz steps. They're going to have a dance after the show, you know. You ought to be in that."

"You wish me, in fact, to become a silent accomplice? To refrain from mentioning this little matter?"

"You put things so well."

"And do you propose to keep my wife's jewels, or may I have them?" "Oh, you may have those," said Jimmy.

"Thank you."

"I never touch paste."

Sir Thomas failed to see the significance of this remark. Jimmy repeated it, with emphasis.

"I never touch paste," he said, "and Lady Blunt's necklace is, I regret to say, made of that material."

Sir Thomas grew purple, "Mind you," said Jimmy, "it's very good paste. I'll say that for it. I didn't see through it till I had it in my hands. Looking at the thingeven quite close-I was taken in for a moment."

The baronet made strange, gurgling

noises.

"Paste!" he said, speaking with difficulty. "Paste! Paste! Damn your impertinence, sir! Are you aware that that necklace cost forty thousand pounds?"

"Then whoever paid that sum for it wasted a great deal of money. Paste it is, and paste it always will be."

"It can't be paste. How do you know?"

"How do I know? I'm an expert. Ask a jeweler how he knows diamonds from paste. He can feel them. He can almost smell them.'

"Let me look. It's impossible." "Certainly. I don't know the extent of your knowledge of pearls. If it is even moderate, I think you will admit

that I am right."

Sir Thomas snatched the necklace from the table and darted with it to the electric light. He scrutinized it, breathing heavily. Jimmy's prophecy was fulfilled. The baronet burst into a vehement flood of oaths, and hurled the glittering mass across the room. unemotional mask of the man seemed to have been torn off him. He shook with futile passion.

Jimmy watched him in interested si-

Sir Thomas ran to the jewels, and would have crushed them beneath his

feet, had not Jimmy sprang forward and jerked him away from them.

"Be quiet," he said. "Confound you, sir, will you stop that noise?"

Sir Thomas, unaccustomed to this style of address, checked the flood for

a moment.

"Now," said Jimmy, "you see the situation. At present, you and I are the only persons alive, to the best of our knowledge, who know about this. Stay, though, there must be one other. The real necklace must have been stolen. It is impossible to say when. Years ago, perhaps. Well, that doesn't The thief, whoever he is, affect us. is not likely to reveal what he knows. So here you have it in a nutshell. Let me go, and don't say a word about having found me here, and I will do the same for you. No one will know that the necklace is not genuine. I shall not mention the subject, and I imagine that you will not. Very well, then. Now, for the alternative. Give me up, give the alarm, and I get-well, whatever they give me. I don't know what it would be, exactly. Something unpleasant. But what do you get out of it? Lady Blunt, if I may say so, is not precisely the sort of lady, I should think, who would bear a loss like this calmly. If I know her, she will shout loudly for another necklace, and see that she gets it. I should fancy you would find the expense unpleasantly heavy. That is only one disadvantage of the alternative. Others will suggest themselves to you. Which is it to be?"

Sir Thomas suspended his operation of glaring at the paste necklace to

glare at Jimmy. "Well?" said Jimmy. "I should like your decision as soon as it's convenient to you. They will be wanting me on the stage in a few minutes. Which is it to be?"

"Which?" snapped Sir Thomas, "Why, go away, and go to the devil!"
"All in good time," said Jimmy cheerfully. "I think you have chosen wisely. Coming downstairs?"

Sir Thomas made no response. He was regarding the necklace moodily. "You'd better come. You'll enjoy.

the show. Charteris says it's the best piece there's been since 'The Magistrate'! And he ought to know. He wrote it. Well, good-by, then. See you downstairs later, I suppose?"

For some time after he had gone, Sir Thomas stood, motionless. he went across the room and picked up the necklace. It occurred to him that if Lady Blunt found it lying in a corner, there would be questions. And questions from Lady Blunt ranked among the keenest of his trials.

"If I had gone into the army," said Jimmy complacently to himself, as he went downstairs, "I should have been a great general. Instead of which, I go about the country, scoring off dyspeptic baronets. Well, well!"

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

The evening's entertainment was over. The last of the nobility and gentry had departed, and Mr. Mc-Eachern had retired to his lair to smoke-in his shirt sleeves-the last and best cigar of the day, when his solitude was invaded by his old New York friend, Mr. Samuel Galer.

"I've done a fair cop, sir," said Mr. Galer, without preamble, quivering with

self-congratulation.

"How's that?" said the master of the

"A fair cop, sir. Caught him in the very blooming act, sir. Dark it was. Oo, pitch. Fair pitch. Like this, sir. Room opposite where the jewels was. One of the gents' bedrooms. Me hiding in there. Door on the jar, Waited a goodish bit. Footsteps. Hullo, they've stopped! Opened door a trifle, and looked out. Couldn't see much. Just made out man's figure. Door of dressing room was open. Showed up against opening. Just see him, Caught you at it, my beauty, have I? says I to myself. Out I jumped. Got hold of him. Being a bit to the good in strength, and knowing something about the game, downed him after a while, and got the darbies on him. Took him off, and locked have how it was, sir."

"Good boy," said Mr. McEachern
"You're no rube." off, and locked him in the cellar. That's

'No, sir."

"Put one of these cigars into your

"Thank you, sir. Very enjoyable thing, a cigar, sir. 'Specially a good I have a light, I thank you, sir."

"Well, and who was he?" "Not the man you told me to watch,

'Nother chap altogether." "That red-headed-

"No, sir. Dark-haired chap. Seen him hanging about, suspicious, for a long time. Had my eye on him."

Mr. Galer chuckled reminiscently. "Rummest card, sir, I ever lagged in my natural," he said.
"How's that?" inquired Mr. Mc-

Eachern amiably.

"Why," grinned Mr. Galer, "you'll hardly believe it, sir, but he had the impudence, the gall, if I may use the word, the sauce to tell me he was in my own line of business. A detective, sir! Said he was going into the room to keep guard. I said to him at the time, I said, it's too thin, cocky. That's to say-

Mr. McEachern started.

"A detective!"

"A detective, sir," said Mr. Galer, with a chuckle. "I said to him at the

"The valet!" cried Mr. McEachern. "That's it, sir. Sir Thomas Blunt's valet, he was. That's how he got into the house, sir."

Mr. McEachern grunted despair-

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ingly.
"The man was right. He is a detective. Sir Thomas brought him down from London. He niver travels without him. Ye've done it. Ye've arristed wan of the bhoys."

Mr. Galer's jaw dropped slightly. "He was? He really was—"

"Ye'd better go straight to where it was ye locked him up, and let him loose. And I'd suggest ye hand him an apology. G'wan, mister. Lively as you can step."

"I never thought-"

"That's the trouble with you fly cops," said his employer caustically. "Ye niver do think."

"It never occurred to me-

"G'wan!" said the master of the house. "Up an alley!"

Mr. Galer departed.
"And I asked them," said Mr. Mc-Eachern, "I asked them particularly not to send me a rube!"

He lit another cigar, and began to brood over the folly of mankind.

He was in a very pessimistic frame of mind when Jimmy curveted into the room, with his head in the clouds and his feet on air.

"Can you spare me a few minutes,

Mr. McEachern?" said Jimmy.

The policeman stared heavily. "I can," he said slowly. "What is

"Several things," said Jimmy, sitting down. "I'll take them in order. I'll start with our bright friend, Galer."

"Galer!"

"Of New York, according to you. Personally, I should think that he's seen about as much of New York as I have of Timbuctoo. Look here, Mc-Eachern, we've known each other some time, and I ask you, as man to man, do you think it playing the game to set a farmer like poor old Galer to watch me? I put it to you?"

The policeman stammered. question chimed in so exactly with the opinion he had just formed, on his own account, of the human bloodhound who was now in the cellar making the peace with his injured fellow worker.

"Hits you where you live, that, doesn't it?" said Jimmy. "I wonder you didn't have more self-respect, let alone consideration for my feelings. I'm surprised at you."

"Ye're-

"In fact, if you weren't going to be my father-in-law, I doubt if I could bring myself to forgive you. As it is, I overlook it."

The policeman's face turned purple. "Only," said Jimmy, with quiet severity, taking a cigar from the box and snipping off the end, "don't let it occur again."

He lit the cigar. Mr. McEachern continued to stare fixedly at him. So might the colonel of a regiment have looked at the latest-joined subaltern, if the latter, during mess, had offered to teach him how to conduct himself on parade.

"I'm going to marry your daugh-

ter," said Jimmy.

"You are going to marry me daughter!" echoed Mr. McEachern, as one in a trance,

"I am going to marry your daugh-

ter.

The purple deepened on Mr. Mc-

Eachern's face.

"More," said Jimmy, blowing a smoke ring. "She is going to marry me. We are going to marry each other," he explained.

McEachern's glare became frightful.

He struggled for speech.

"I must congratulate you," said Jimmy, "on the way things went off tonight. It was a thorough success. Everybody was saying so. You're the most popular man in the county. What would they say of you at Jefferson Market, if they knew? By the way, do you correspond with any of the old set? Splendid fellows, they were. I wish we had some of them here tonight."

Mr. McEachern's emotions found relief in words. He rose, and waved a huge fist in Jimmy's face. His great

body was shaking with rage.

"You!" shouted the policeman, "You!"

The fist was within an inch of Jimmy's chin.

Outwardly calm, inwardly very much alive to the fact that at any moment the primitive man in him might lead his prospective father-in-law beyond the confines of self-restraint, Jimmy sat still in his chair, his eyes fixed steadily on those of his relative-to-be. It was an uncomfortable moment. Mr. McEachern, if he made an assault, might regret it subsequently, But he would not be the first to do so. The man who did that would be a certain James Pitt. If it came to blows,

the younger man could not hope to hold his own with the huge policeman.

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"You!" roared McEachern. Jimmy fancied he could feel the wind of the moving fist. "You marry me daughter! A New York crook. The sweepings of the Bowery. A man who ought to be in jail. I'd like to break your face in."

"I noticed that," said Jimmy. "If it's all the same to you, will you take your fist out of my mouth? It makes it a little difficult to carry on a conversation. And I've several things I

should like to say."

"Ye'll listen to me!"
"Certainly. You were saying?"
"Ye come here. Ye worm yourself into my house crawl into it..."

into my house, crawl into it——"
"I came by invitation, and in passing, not on all fours. Mr. McEachern, may I ask one question?"

"What is ut?"

"If you didn't want me, why did

you let me stop here?"

The policeman stopped as if he had received a blow. There came flooding back into his mind the recollection of his position. In his wrath, he had forgotten that Jimmy knew his secret. And he looked on Jimmy as a man who would use his knowledge.

He sat down heavily.

Jimmy went on smoking in silence for a while. He saw what was passing in his adversary's mind, and it seemed to him that it would do no harm to let the thing sink in.

"Look here, Mr. McEachern," he said, at last, "I wish you could listen quietly to me for a minute or two. There's really no reason on earth why we should always be at one another's throats in this way. We might just as well be friends, as we should be if we met now for the first time. Our difficulty is that we know too much about each other. You knew me in New York, and you know what I did there. Naturally, you don't like the idea of my marrying your daughter. can't believe that I'm not simply an ordinary yegg, like the rest of the crooks you used to know. I promise you, I'm not. Can't you see that it

doesn't matter what a man has been? It's what he is and what he means to be that counts. Mr. Patrick McEachern, of Corven Abbey, isn't the same as Constable McEachern, of the New York police. Well, then, I have nothing to do with the man I was when you knew me first. I have disowned him. He's a back number, I am an ordinary English gentleman now. My uncle has left me more than well off. I'm a baronet. And is it likely that a baronet-with money, mind you-is going to carry on the yegg business as a side line? Be reasonable. There's really no possible objection to me now. Let's shake, and call the fight off. Does that go?"

The policeman was plainly not unmoved by these arguments. drummed his fingers on the table, and

stared thoughtfully at Jimmy.
"Is Molly—" he said, at -" he said, at length,

"does Molly-

"Yes," said Jimmy. "And I can promise you I love her. Come along, now. Why wait?"

McEachern looked doubtfully at Jimmy's outstretched hand. He moved his own an inch from the table, then let it fall again,

"Come on," said Jimmy. "Do it

now. Be a sport."

And with a great grunt, which might have meant anything, from resignation to cordiality, Mr. McEachern capitulated.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The American liner, St. Louis, lay in the Empress Dock, at Southampton, taking aboard her passengers. All sorts and conditions of men flowed in an unceasing stream up the gangway.

Leaning over the second-class railing, Jimmy Pitt and Spike Mullins watched

them thoughtfully.

Jimmy looked up at the Blue Peter that fluttered from the foremast, and then at Spike. The Bowery boy's face was stolid and expressionless. He was smoking a short wooden pipe, with an air of detachment.

"Well, Spike," said Jimmy. "Your

schooner's on the tide now, isn't it? Your vessel's at the quay. You've got some queer-looking fellow travelers. Don't miss the two Cinghalese sports, and the man in the turban and the baggy breeches. I wonder if they're air-tight. Useful if he fell overboard."

"Sure," said Spike, directing a contemplative eye toward the garment in question. "He knows his business."

"I wonder what those men on the deck are writing. They've been scrib-bling away ever since we came here. Probably society journalists. We shall see in next week's Sphere: 'Among the second-class passengers we noticed Mr. "Spike" Mullins, looking as cheery as ever.' It's a pity you're so set on going, Spike. Why not change your mind, and stop?"

For a moment, Spike looked wistful. Then his countenance resumed its woodenness. "Dere ain't no use for me dis side, Mr. Chames," he said. "New York's de spot. Youse don't want none of me, now you're married. How's Miss Molly, Mr. Chames?"

"Splendid, Spike; thanks. We're going over to France by to-night's boat." "It's been a queer business," said Jimmy, after a pause. "A deuced rum business. Well, I've come very well out of it, at any rate. It seems to me that you're the only one of us who doesn't end happily, Spike. I'm married. McEachern's butted into society so deep that it would take an excavating party with dynamite to get him out of it. Molly. Well, Molly's made a bad bargain, but I hope she won't regret it. We're all going some, except you. You're going out on the old trail again—which begins in Third Avenue and ends in Sing Sing. Why tear yourself away, Spike?"

Spike concentrated his gaze on a weedy young emigrant in a blue jersey, who was having his eye examined by the overworked doctor, and seemed

to be resenting it.

"Dere's nuttin' doin' dis side, Mr. Chames," he said, at length. "I want to get busy."
"Ulysses Mullins!" said Jimmy, look-

ing at him curiously. "I know the feeling. There's only one cure, and I don't suppose you'll ever take it. You don't think a lot of women, do you? You're the rugged bachelor.'

"Goils-" began Spike comprehensively, and abandoned the topic with-

out dilating on it further.

Jimmy lit his pipe, and threw the match overboard. The sun came out from behind a cloud, and the water sparkled.

were great jools, Chames," said Spike thoughtfully.

"I believe you're still brooding over them, Spike."

"We could have got away wit' dem, if you'd have stood for it.

"You are brooding over them. Spike, I'll tell you something which will console you a little before you start out on your wanderings. That necklace was paste."

"What's dat?"

"Nothing but paste. They weren't

worth thirty dollars."

A light of understanding came into Spike's eyes. His face beamed with the smile of one to whom dark matters are made clear.

"So dat's why you wouldn't stand for gettin' away wit' dem!" he ex-

claimed.

The last voyager had embarked. The deck was full to congestion.

"They'll be sending us ashore in a minute," said Jimmy. "I'd better be moving. Let me know how you're making out, Spike, from time to time.

You know the address. And, I say, It's just possible you may find you want a dollar or two, every now and then. When you're going to buy another automobile, for instance. Well, you know where to write for it, don't vou?"

"T'anks, Mr. Chames. But dat'll be all right. I'm going to sit in at another game dis time. Politics, Mr. Chames. A fr'en' of a mug what I knows has got a pull. Me brother Dan is an alderman wit' a grip on de 'Levent' Ward," he went on softly. "He'll find me a job!"

"You'll be a boss before you know

where you are.'

"Sure!" said Spike, grinning mod-

estly.
"You ought to be a thundering success in American politics," said Jimmy. "You've got all the necessary quali-

A steward passed.

"Any more for the shore?"

"Which shore?" asked Jimmy. "Well,

"Good-by, Mr. Chames."
"Good-by," said Jimmy. "And good luck!"

Two tugs attached themselves excitedly to the liner's side. The great ship began to move slowly from the shore. Jimmy stood at the water side, and watched her. The rails were lined with gesticulating figures. In the front row, Spike waved his hat with silent vigor.

The sun had gone behind the clouds. As the ship slid out on its way, a stray

BLAKENEY GRAY.

beam pierced the grayness. It shone on a red head.



# LOVE'S ABODE

OVE calls at will on all who let him in; He carries lavish gifts that all may win. Should you be out when he doth call some day, Or pass him by unknowing on the way, Come hither, and his smiling face you'll see-I'm glad to say that he abides with me!

# TRUXTON KING George Barr Mc Cutcheon

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A young American, Truxton King, a member of a prominent New York family, has come abroad in search of romance and adventure; and finally finds himself in Edelweiss, the capital of Graustark. The hereditary ruler of the little kingdom is Prince Robin, a lad of seven, who is under the guardianship of John Tullis, a life-long friend of the little prince's dead American father. King, finding at first but little romance in the place, strolls into the shop-of William Spantz, the court armorer, and there encounters the latter's beautiful niece, Olga Platanova. The girl begs him not to come there any more, hinting at some mysterious danger to both herself and him. The minister of police, Baron Dangloss, sends for King, and after evincing an extraordinary knowledge of the young man's previous history, tells him that Olga is an anarchist and warns him to have nothing further to do with her. King engages a guide named Hobbs to take him to the palace grounds. He there breaks bounds and in the private gardens meets the little prince and a lovely young woman whom the prince addresses as "Aunt Loraine" and to whom the American is strongly attracted. There is a plot, headed by the Iron Count, Marlanx, to seize the government and put to death the prince. Olga Platanova is selected by lot for this last task. The beautiful Countess Marlanx suspects her husband of conspiring, and so informs John Tullis, who is in love with her. King goes with Hobbs to a certain witch's hut in the mountains, where he meets the prince and many of his court, among whom is "Aunt Loraine." A terrible storm springs up. Behind a crack in a rickety door King sees a basilisk eye glaring at them. An immediate search is made, but no one is discovered. King is warned by a note from Olga to leave the city, but pays no attention to it. The Countess Marlanx mysteriously disappears. King goes again to the witch's hut, where he is attacked and captured by a band of desperadoes, at the instance of Marlanx, who believes him a spy. He is taken through the sewers and confined in a secret, strong room beneath Spantz's shop. Here King, to his horror, hears of the plot to kill the prince. To his place of confinement is brought "Aunt Loraine," who has been kidnapped by Marlanx. King confesses his love and discovers she is no royal princess, but the sister of John Tullis. King and Loraine manage to escape, and worn out and pursued, take refuge in a freight car. Tullis is decoyed away into the mountains on a search for his sister. It is the day for the appointed bomb throwing, a holiday in Edelweiss, and Olga Platanova stands ready in the public square, awaiting the arrival of the prince.

#### CHAPTER XVII.



HE man who stood in the middle of the freight car, looking down in wonder at the fugitives, was a tall vagabond of the most picturesque type. No ragamuffin was ever so tattered and torn as this rakish individual. His

clothes barely hung together on his lank frame; he was barefoot and hatless; a great mop of black hair topped his shrewd, rugged face; coal-black eyes snapped and twinkled beneath shaggy brows, and a delighted, knowing grin spread slowly over his rather boyish countenance. He was not a creature to strike terror to the heart of any one; on the contrary, his mischievous, sprightly face produced an impression of genuine good humor and absolute indifference to the harsh things of life.

Long, thin lips curled into a smile of delicious regard; his sides shook with the quiet chuckle of understanding. He did not lose his smile, even when the match burned his finger tips

and fell to the floor of the car. Instead, the grin was broader when he struck the second match and resumed his amused scrutiny of his fellow lodgers. This time he practiced thrift; he lighted a cigarette with the match before tossing it aside. Then he softly slid the car door back in its groove and looked out into the moist, impentrable night. A deep sigh left his smiling lips; a retrospective languor took possession of his long frame; he sighed

again, and still he smiled.

Leaning against the side of the door, this genial gypsy smoked in blissful silence until the stub grew so short that it burned his already singed fingers. He was thinking of other days and nights and of many maids in far-off lands, and of countless journeys in which he, too, had had fair and gentle company—short journeys, yes, but not to be forgotten. Ah, to be knight of the road and everlasting squire to the Goddess of Love! He always had been that—ever since he could remember; he had loved a hundred briefly; none over long. It was the only way.

Once more he turned to look upon the sleeping pair. This time he lighted the stub of a tallow candle. The tender, winning smile in his dark eyes grew to positive radiance. Ah, how he envied this great, sleeping wayfarer! How beautiful his mistress! How fortunate the lover! And how they slept—how tired they were! Whence had they come? From what distant land had they traveled together to reach this holiday-garnished city in the hills? Vagabonds, tramps! They were of his world, a part of his family; he knew and had loved a hundred of her sisters, he was one of a hundred thousand brothers to this man.

Why should he stay here to spoil their waking hour? The thought came to him suddenly. No; he would surrender his apartment to them. He was free and footloose; he could go elsewhere. He would go elsewhere.

Softly, he tiptoed to his own corner of the car, looking over his shoulder with anxious eyes to see that his movements did not disturb them. He gath-

ered up his belongings; an ancient violin case, a stout walking stick, a goodly sized pack, done up in gaudy cloth, a well-worn pair of sandals, with long, frayed lacings. As gently, he stole back to the door. Here he sat down, with his feet hanging outside the car. Then, with many a sly, wary glance at his good comrades, he put on his sandals and laced them up the leg. He tossed a kiss to the sleeping girl, his darky gypsy face aglow with admiration and mischief, and was about to blow out the light of his candle.

Then he changed his mind. He arose and stood over them again, looking long and solemnly at the face of the sleeping girl. Ah, yes, she was the most beautiful he had ever seen—the very fairest. He had known her sisters, but—no, they were not like this one. With a sly grimace of envy, he shook his fist at the tall man, whose leg served as a pillow for the tired

head,

The girl looked wan and tired-and hungry. Poor thing! Never had he seen one so sweet and lovely as she: never had he seen such a shockingly muddy mackintosh, however, as the one she wore, never were hands so dirty as the slender ones which lay limp before her. With a determined shake of his head and a new flash of the eye, he calmly seated himself and began to open his ragged pack. Once he paused, a startled look in his face. He caught sight of the revolver at Truxton's side for the first time. The instant of alarm passed and a braver smile than ever came. Ah, here was a knight who would fight for his ladylove! Good fellow! Bravo!

At last his small store of food lay exposed. Without hesitation, he divided the pieces of smoked venison, giving one part to himself, two to the sleepers; then the miller's bread and the cheese, and the bag of dates he had bought the day before. He tied up his own slender portion and would have whistled for the joy of it all had he not bethought himself in time.

From one of his pockets he drew out tobacco and cigarette papers. With his

back planted up against the wall of the car, his legs crossed, and his feet wiggling time to the inward tune he sang, he calmly rolled half a dozen cigarettes, and placed them, one by one, beside the feast. One match from his thin supply he placed alongside the cigarettes. Then he looked very doubtful. No; one might blow out. He must not be niggardly. So he kept two for himself and gave three to the guest at his banquet.

Again he blew a kiss to the prettiest girl he had ever seen. Snuffing his candle, he dropped to the ground and closed the door against all spying, un-

civil eyes.

The first gray of dawn was growing in the sombre east. He looked out over the tops of cars and sniffed the air. The rain was over, he knew. A tinge of red that none but the gypsy could have distinguished betrayed the approach of sunny day. Jauntily, he swung off down the path between the lines of cars, his fickle mind wavering between the joys of the coming day and the memory of the loveliest Romany he had ever encountered.

Daybreak found him at the wharf gates. It was gloomy here and silent; the city above looked asleep and unfruitful. His heart was gay; he longed for company. Whimsical, carelesshearted, he always obeyed the impulse that struck him first. As he stood there, surveying the wet, deserted wharf, it came to him suddenly that if he went back and played one soft love song before the door of the car, they might invite him to join them in the breakfast that the genie had brought.

His long legs were swift. In five minutes he was halfway down the line of cars, at the extreme end of which stood the happy lodging place of his heart's desire. Then he paused, a dubious frown between his eyes. No! he said, slapping his own cheek soundly; it would not be fair! He would not disturb them, not he! How could he have thought of such a thing? Lebon Dieu! Never! He would break-

fast alone!

Coming to an empty flat car, direct from the quarries, he resolutely seated himself upon its edge and, with amiable resignation, set about devouring his early meal, all the while casting longing, almost appealing, glances toward the next car but one. Busy little switch engines began chugging about the yards; the railroad, at least, was exhibiting some signs of life, Here and there the crews were "snaking" out sections and bumping them off to other parts of the gridiron; a car here, a car there-all aflounder, but quite simple to this merry wanderer. He knew all about switching, he did. It did not cause him the least uneasiness when a sudden jar told him that an engine had been attached to the distant end of the string in which he breakfasted. Nor was he disturbed when the cars began to move. What cared he? He would ride in his dining car to the objective switch, wherever that was, and no doubt would find himself nearer the main freight depot, with little or no walking to do on his journey to the square.

But the string was not bound for another track in the yards; it was on its way to the main line, thence off through the winding valley into strange

and distant lands.

Sir Vagabond, blissfully swinging his heels and munching his venison, smiled amiably upon the yard men as he passed them by. So genial was the smile, so frank the salutation, that not one scowled back at him or hurled the chunk of coal that bespeaks a surly temper. Down through the maze of side tracks whisked the little train, out upon the main line, with a thin shriek of greeting, past the freight houses and It was then that Sir Vagabond sat up very straight, a look of mild interest in his eyes. Interest gave way to perplexity, perplexity to con-cern. What's this? Leaving the city? He wasted no time. This would never do! Clutching his belongings to his side, he vaulted from one hand, nimbly and with the gracefulness of wide experience, landing safely on his feet at the roadside.

There he stood, with the wry, dazed look of a man who suddenly finds himself guilty of arrant stupidity, watching the cars whiz past on their way to the open country. Just ahead was the breach in the wall, through which all trains entered or left the city. Into that breach shot the train, going faster and faster as it saw the straight, clear track beyond. He waited until the tail end whisked itself out of sight in the cut below the city walls, and then trudged slowly, dejectedly, in the opposite direction, his heart in his boots. He was thinking of the luckless pair in the empty "box."

Suddenly, he stopped, his chin up, his hands to his sides. A hearty peal of laughter soared from his lips. He was regarding the funny side of the situation. The joke was on them! It was rich! The more he thought of their astonishment on awaking, the

more he laughed.

His immense levity attracted attention. Four or five men approached him from the shadows of the freight houses; ugly, unsmiling fellows. They demanded of him the cause of his unseemly mirth. With tears in his merry black eyes, he related the plight of the pair of slumberers, dwelling more or less sentimentally on the tender beauty of the maiden fair. They plied him with questions. He described the couple-even glowingly. Then the sinister fellows smiled; more than that, they clapped each other on the back and swore splendidly. He was amazed, and his own good humor gave way to fierce resentment. What right had these ruffians to laugh at the misfortunes of that unhappy maid?

A switchman came up, and one of the men, a lank American, whom we should recognize by the sound of his voice—having heard it before—asked whither the train was bound and when it would first stop in its flight.

"At the Poo quarries, seventeen kilometres down the line. They cut out a few empties there. She goes on to the division point, after that."

"Any trains up from that direction this morning?" demanded Newport.

"Not till this afternoon. Most of the crews are in the city for the—" But the switchman had no listeners beyond that statement.

And so it was that the news spread over town at five o'clock that Truxton King was where he could do no harm. It was well known that the train would make forty miles an hour down the steep grade into the lower valley.

Up into the city strolled Sir Vagabond, his fiddle in his hand, his heart again as light as a feather. Some day—ah, some day!—he would see her again on the road. It was always the way. Then he would tell her how unhappy he had been—for a minute. She was so pretty, so very pretty! He sighed deeply. We see no more of him.

When Truxton King first awoke to the fact that they were no longer lying motionless in the dreary yards, he leaped to his feet, with a startled shout of alarm. Loraine sat up, blinking her eyes in half-conscious wonder. It was broad daylight, of course; the train was rattling through the long cut, just below the city walls. With frantic energy, he pulled open the door. For a minute he stared at the scudding walls of stone, so close at hand, uncomprehendingly. Then the truth burst upon him with the force of a mighty blow. He staggered back, his jaw dropping, his eyes glaring.

"What the dev— Great God, Loraine! We're going! We're moving!"

he cried hoarsely.

"I know it," she gasped, her body rocking violently with the swaying of

the wild, top-heavy little car.

"Great Scott! How we're pounding it! Fifty miles an hour. Where are we?" he cried, aghast. He could scarcely keep his feet, so terrific was the speed and so sickening the motion.

She got to her feet and lurched to his side. "Don't fall out!" she almost shrieked. He drew back with her. Together they swayed like reeds in a windstorm, staring dizzily at the wall before them.

Suddenly, the train shot out into the open, farm-spattered valley. Truxton

fell back, dumfounded.

"The country: ne exclaimed. "We've been carried away. I—I can't believe my senses. Could we have slept—what a fool, what an idiot! God in heaven! The prince! He is lost!" He was beside himself with anguish and despair, raging like a madman, cursing himself for a fool, a dog, a murderer.

Little less distressed than her companion, Loraine Tullis still had the good sense to keep him from leaping from the car. He had shouted to her that he must get back to the city; she could go on to the next town and find a hiding place. He would come to her as soon as he had given the

alarm.

"You would be killed," she cried, clutching his arm fiercely. "You never can jump, Truxton. See how we are running. If you jump, I shall follow. I won't go on alone. I am as much to blame as you."

The big, strong fellow broke down and cried, utterly disheartened.

"Don't cry, Truxton, please, don't cry!" she pleaded. "Something will happen. We must stop some time. Then we can get another train back, or telegraph, or hire a wagon. It must be very early. The sun is scarcely up. Do be brave! Don't give up!"

He squared his shoulders. "You put

He squared his shoulders. "You put me to shame!" he cried abjectly. "I'm—I'm unnerved, that's all. It was too much of a blow. After we'd got away from those scoundrels so neatly, too. Oh, it's maddening! I'll be all right in a minute. You plucky, plucky dar-

ling!"

The train whirled through a small hamlet, without even slackening its speed. Truxton endeavored to shout a warning to two men who stood by the gates; but they merely laughed, not comprehending. Then he undertook to arrest the attention of the engineer. He leaned from the door and shouted. The effort was futile, almost disastrous. A lurch came near to hurling him to the rocky roadbed. Now and then they passed farmers on the highroad, far above, bound for the city. They called out to them, but the cries

were in vain. With every minute they were running farther and farther away from the city of Edelweiss; every mile was adding to the certainty of the doom which hung over the little prince and his people.

A second small station flew by. "Ronn: Seven kilometres to Edelweiss." He looked at her in despair.

"We're going faster and faster," he grated. "This is the fastest train in the world, Loraine, bar none."

Just then his gaze alighted on the pathetic breakfast and the wandering cigarettes. He stared as if hypnotized. Was he going mad? An instant later, he was on his hands and knees, examining the mysterious feast. She joined him at once; no two faces ever before were so puzzled and perplexed.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, drawing her away from the spot in quick alarm, comprehension flooding his brain. "I see it all! We've been deliberately shanghaied! We've been bottled up here, drugged, perhaps, and shipped out of town by fast freight—no destination. Don't touch that stuff! It's probably full of poison. Great Scott! What a clever gang they are! And what a blithering idiot they have in me to deal with. Oh, how easy!"

Whereupon he proceeded to kick the unoffending breakfast, cigarettes and all, out of the car door. To their dying day, they were to believe that the food had been put there by agents of the great conspirator. It readily may be surmised that neither of them was given to sensible deductions during their astounding flight. If they had thought twice, they might have seen the folly of their quick conclusions. Marlanx's men would not have sent Loraine off in a manner like this. But the distracted pair were not in an analytical frame of mind just then; that is why the gentle munificence of Sir Vagabond came to a barren waste.

Mile after mile flew by. The unwilling travelers, depressed beyond description, had given up all hope of leaving the car until it reached the point intended by the wily plotters. To their

amazement, however, the speed began to slacken perceptibly after they had left the city ten or twelve miles behind. Truxton was leaning against the side of the door, gloomily surveying the bright green landscape. For some time she had been steadying herself by clinging to his arm. They had cast off the unsightly rain coats and other clumsy articles. Once, through sheer inability to control his impulses, he had placed his arm about her slim waist, but she had gently freed herself. Her look of reproach was sufficient to check all future impulses of a like nature.

"Hello!" said he, coming out of his bitter dream. "We're slowing up." He looked out and ahead. "No station is in sight. There's a bridge down the road a bit—yes, there's our same old river. By George!"

"What is it?" she cried, struck by his

sudden energy of speech.

"They're running slow for the bridge. Afraid of the floods. D'ye see? If they creep up to it as they do in the United States when they're cautious, we'll politely drop off, andmy soul, she's coming down to a snail's pace. We can swing off, Loraine. Now's our chance!"

The train was barely creeping up to the bridge. He clasped her in the strong crook of his left arm, slid down to a sitting position, and boldly pushed himself clear of the car, landing on his feet. Staggering forward with the impetus he had received, he would have fallen, except for a mighty effort. A sharp groan escaped his lips as he low-ered her to the ground. She looked anxiously into his face, and saw nothing there but relief.

The cars rumbled across the bridge, picked up speed beyond, and thundered off in the distance with never so much as a thought of the two who stood beside the track and laughed hys-

terically.

"Come along," said the man briefly.
"We must try to reach that station back there. There I can telegraph in. Oh!" His first attempt to walk brought out a groan of pain.

He had turned his ankle in the leap

to the ground. She was deeply concerned, but he sought to laugh it off. Gritting his teeth determinedly, he led the way back along the track.

"Lean on me," she cried despair-

"Nonsense," he said, with grim stubbornness. "I don't mind the pain. We can't stop for a sprained ankle. It's an old one I got playing football. We may have to go a little slow, but we'll not stop, my dear-not till we get word

to Dangloss!"

She found a long, heavy stick for him; thereafter he hobbled with greater speed and less pain. At a wagon road crossing they paused to rest, having covered two miles. The strain was telling on him; perspiration stood out in great drops upon his brow; he was beginning to despair. Her little cry of joy caused him to look up from the swollen ankle, which he was regarding with dubious concern. An oxcart was approaching from the west.
"A ride!" she cried joyously. She

had been ready to drop with fatigue; her knees were shaking. His first exclamation of joy died away in a groan

of dismay.

"That thing couldn't get us anywhere in a week," he said.

"But it will help," she cried brightly, an optimist by force of necessity,

They stopped the cart and bargained for a ride to Ronn. The man was a farmer, slow and suspicious. He hag-

"The country's full of evil men and women these days," he demurred. "Besides, I have a heavy enough load

as it is for my poor beasts.'

Miss Tullis conducted the negotiations, making the best of her year's acquaintance with the language of the country.

"Don't tell him why we are in such a hurry," cautioned King. "He may be a Marlanx sympathizer."

"You have nothing in your cart but melons," she said to the farmer, peeping under the corner of the canvas covering.

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by the highroad to Edelweiss," he protested. "A good ten kilometres."

"But carry us until we come up with some one who can give us horses."

"Horses!" he croaked. "Every horse in the valley is in Edelweiss by this time. This is the great day there. The statue of-

"Yes, yes, I know. We are bound for Edelweiss. Can you get us there in two hours?"

"With these beasts, poor things? Never!

"It will be worth your while. A hundred gavvos if you carry us to a place where we can secure quicker

transportation."

In time, she won him over. He agreed to carry them along the way, at his best speed, until they came up with better beasts, or reached the city gates. It was the best he could do. The country was practically deserted on this day. At best, there were but few horses in the valley; mostly oxen. They climbed up to the seat, and the tortuous journev began. The farmer trotted beside the wheel nearly all of the way, descanting warmly in painful English on the present condition of things in the hills

"The rascals have made way with the beautiful Miss Tullis. She is the American lady stopping at the castle. You should see her, sir. Excepting our dear Princess Yetive-God rest her soul!-she is the most beautiful creature Graustark has ever seen. I have seen her often. Not quite so grand as the Countess Ingomede, but fairer, believe me. She is beloved by every one. Many a kind and generous word has she spoken to me. My onion beds are well known to her. She has come to my farm time and again, sir, with the noble personages, while riding, and she has in secret bought my little slips of onions. She has said to me that she adores them, but that she can only eat them in secret. Ah, sir, it is a sad day for Graustark that evil has happened to her. Her brother, they say, is off in the Dawsbergen hills searching for her. He is a grand man."

His passengers were duly interested.

She nudged the lugubrious Truxton when the man spoke of the onions. "What a fibber! I hate onions."

"She is to be married to the Count Vos Engo; a fine lad, sir. Now she is gone, I don't know what he will do. Suicide, mayhap. Many is the time I have cautioned her not to ride in the hills without a strong guard. bandits are getting very bold."

"Do you know the great Count Mar-lanx?" demanded King, possessed of a sudden thought. The man faced him at the mention of the name, a suspi-

cious gleam in his eyes.

"Count Marlanx!" he snorted. Without another word, he drew the beasts to a standstill. There was no mistaking the angry scowl. "Are you friends of that snake? If you are, get out of my cart.

"He's all right," cried Truxton. "Tell him who we are, Loraine, and why we

must get to the city."

Five minutes later, the farmer, overcome by the stupendous news, was lashing his oxen with might and main; the astonished beasts tore down the road to Ronn so bravely that there seemed more prospect of getting a telegram through in time. All the way, the excited countryman groaned and swore and sputtered his prayers. At Ronn they learned that the operator had been unable to call Edelweiss since seven o'clock. The wires were down, or had been cut. Truxton left a message to be sent to Dangloss in case he could get the wire, and off they started again for the city gates, having lost considerable time by the diverted mile or two.

Not man, woman, or child did they counter as the miles crept by. The encounter as the miles crept by. country was barren of humanity. Ahead of them was the ascent to be conquered by oxen so old and feeble that the prospect was more than du-

"If it should be that my team gives out, I will run on myself to give the alarm," cried the worthy, perspiring

charioteer. "It shall not be! God preserve us!"

Three times the oxen broke down, panting and stubborn; as many times he thwacked them and kicked them and cursed them into action again. They stumbled pitifully, but they did manage

to go forward.

In time the city gates came in sight -far up the straight, narrow road. "Pray God we may not be too late!" groaned the farmer. "Damn the swine who took their horses to town before the sun was up. Curse them for fools and imbeciles. Fools never get into heaven. Thank the good Lord for that!"

It seemed to the quivering Americans that the gates were mocking them by drawing farther away instead of coming nearer.

"Are we going backward?" groaned Truxton, his hands gripping the side

of the bounding seat.

Near the gates, which were still open, it occurred to him, in a single flash of dismay, that he and Loraine would be recognized and intercepted by Marlanx watchers. Between the fierce jolts of the great cart, he managed to convey his fears to her.

It was she who had the solution. They might succeed in passing the gates if they hid themselves in the bed of the cart, underneath the thick canvas covering. The farmer lifted the cloth, and they crawled down among the melons. In this fashion they not only covered the remainder of the distance, half stifled by the heat and half murdered by the uncomfortable position, but passed through the gates and were taken clattering down the streets toward the centre of town.

"To the tower!" cried the anxious Truxton.

"Impossible!" shouted the farmer. "The streets are roped off, and the crowds are too great.

"Then let us out as near to the tower

as possible," cried the other.
"Here we are," cried the driver, a few minutes later, pulling up his halfdead oxen, and leaping to the ground. He threw off the covering, and they lost no time in tumbling from their bed of melons to the cobblestone pavement of a narrow alley into which he had turned for safety. "Through this passage!" he gasped, hoarse with excitement. "The tower is below. Follow me! My oxen will stand. I am going with you!"

Off through the alley they hurried. King disdaining the pain his ankle was giving him. They came to the crowded square a few minutes later. The clock in the cathedral pointed to twelve o'clock and after! The catastrophe had not yet taken place; the people were laughing and singing and shouting. They were in time. Everywhere they heard glad voices crying out that the prince was coming! It was the royal band that they heard!

"Great God!" cried Truxton, stopping suddenly, and pointing with trembling hand to a spot across the street and a little below where they had pushed through the resentful, staring throng on the sidewalk. "There she is!

At the corner! Stop her!"

He had caught sight of Olga Plata-

The first row of dragoons was already passing in front of her. Less than two hundred feet away rolled the royal coach of gold! All this flashed before the eyes of the distracted pair who were now dashing frantically into the open street, disregarding the shouts of the police and the howls of the crowd.

anarchist!" shouted hoarsely. He looked like one himself. The bomb! "The bomb! Stop the

prince!"

Colonel Ouinnox recognized this bearded, uncouth figure, and the flying, terrified girl at his heels. King was dragging her along by the hand. There was an instant of confusion on the part of the vanguard, a drawing of sabres, a movement toward the coach in which the prince rode.

Quinnox alone prevented the dragoons from cutting down the pallid madman who stumbled blindly toward the coaches beyond. He whirled his steed after an astonished glance in all directions, shouting eager commands all the while. When he reached the side of the gasping American, that person had stopped, and was pointing toward the trembling Olga, who had seen and recognized him.

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"Stop the coach!" cried King. Loraine was running frantically through the ranks of horsemen, screaming her words of alarm.

The Duke of Perse leaped from his carriage and ran forward, shouting to the soldiers to seize the disturbers. Panic seized the crowd. There was a mad rush for the corner above. Olga Platanova stood alone, her eyes wide and glassy, staring as if petrified at the face of Truxton King.

He saw the object in her wavering hand. With a yell, he dashed for safety down the seething avenue. The Duke of Perse struck at him as he passed, ignoring the frantic cry of warning that he uttered. A plain, white-faced farmer in a smock of blue, was crossing the street with mighty bounds, his eyes glued upon the arm of the frail, terrified anarchist. If he could only arrest that palsied, uncertain arm!

But she hurled the bomb, her hands going to her eyes as she fell upon her knees.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

The scene which followed beggars all powers of description.

A score of men and horses lay writhing in the street; others crept away screaming with pain; human flesh and that of animals lay in the path of the frenzied, panic-stricken holiday crowd; blood mingled with the soft mud of Regengetz Circus, slimy, slippery, ugly!

Rent bodies of men in once gaudy uniforms, now flattened and bruised in warm, cozy death, were piled in a mass where, but a moment before, the wondering vanguard of troopers had clustered. For many rods in all directions stunned creatures were struggling to their feet after the stupendous shock that had felled them. The clattering of frightened horses, the shouts and screams of men and women, the gruesome rush of ten thousand people in stampede-all in twenty seconds after the engine of death left the hand of Olga Platanova.

Olga Platanova! There was nothing left of her! She had failed to do the deed expected of her, but she would

not hear the execrations of those who had depended upon her to kill the prince. We draw a veil across the picture of Olga Platanova after the bomb left her hand; no one may look upon the quivering, scattered thing that once was a living, beautiful woman. The glimpse she had of Truxton King's haggard face unnerved her. She faltered, her strength of will collapsed; she hurled the bomb in a panic of indecision. Massacre, but not conquest!

Down in an alley below the tower, a trembling, worn team of oxen stood for a day and night, awaiting the return of a master who was never to come back to them. God rest his simple soul!

Truxton King picked himself up from the street, dazed, bewildered, but unhurt. Everywhere about him mad people were rushing and screeching. Scarcely knowing what he did, he fled with the crowd. From behind him came the banging of guns, followed by new shouts of terror. He knew what it meant! The revolutionists had begun the assault on the paralyzed minions of the government.

Scores of Royal Guardsmen swept

Scores of Royal Guardsmen swept past him, rushing to the support of the coach of gold. The sharp, shrill scream of a single name rose above the tumult. Some one had seen the Iron Count.

"Marlanx!"

He looked back toward the gory entrance to the Circus. There was Marlanx, mounted and swinging a sabre on high. Ahead was the mass of carriages, filled with the white-faced, palsied prey from the court of Graustark. Somewhere in that huddled, glittering crowd were two beings he willingly would give his own life to save.

Foot soldiers, policemen, and mounted guardsmen began firing into the crowd at the square, without sense or discretion, falling back, nevertheless, before the well-timed, deliberate advance of the mercenaries. From somewhere near the spot where Olga Platanova fell came a harsh, penetrating command:

"Cut them off! Cut them off from the castle!"

It was his cue. He dashed into the street, and ran toward the carriages, shouting with all his strength:

"Turn back! It is Marlanx! To the

Then it was that he saw the prince. The boy was standing on a seat on the royal coach of state, holding out his eager little hands to some one in the thick of the crowd that surged about him. He was calling some one's name, but no one could have heard him.

Truxton's straining eyes caught sight of the figure in gray that struggled forward in response to the cries and the extended hands. He pushed his way savagely through the crowd; he came up with her as she reached the side of the coach, and with a shout of encouragement grasped her in his arms.
"Aunt Loraine! Aunt Loraine!" He

now heard the name the boy cried with

all his little heart.

Two officers struck at the uncouth, desperate American as he lifted the girl from the ground and deliberately tossed

her into the coach.

"Turn back!" he shouted. A horseman rode him down. He looked up as the plunging animal's hoofs clattered about his head. Vos Engo, with drawn sword, was crowding up to the carriage door, shouting words of rejoicing at sight of the girl he loved.

Somehow he managed to crawl from under the hoofs and wheels, not without thumps and bruises, and made his way to the sidewalk. The coach had swung around, and the horses were being lashed into a gallop for the castle

gates.

He caught a glimpse of her, holding the prince in her arms, her white, agonized face turned toward the mob. Dis-

tinctly he heard her cry:

"Save him! Save Truxton King!" From the sidewalks swarmed wellarmed hordes of desperadoes, firing wildly into the ranks of devoted guardsmen grouped in the avenue to cover the flight of their royal charge. Truxton fled from the danger zone as fast as his legs would carry him. Bullets were striking all about him. Later

on he was to remember his swollen,

bitterly painful ankle; but there was no thought of it, now. He had played football with this same ankle in worse condition than it was now-and he had old

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played for the fun of it, too.

He realized that his life was worth absolutely nothing if he fell into the hands of the enemy. His only chance lay in falling in with some sane, loyal citizen who could be prevailed upon to hide him until the worst was over. There seemed no possibility of getting inside the castle grounds. He had done his duty, and—he laughed bitterly as he thought of it-he had been ridden down by the men he came to save.

Some one was shouting his name, behind in the scurrying crowd. He turned for a single glance backward. Little Mr. Hobbs, pale as a ghost, his cap gone, his clothing torn, was panting at

his elbow.

"God save us!" gasped Hobbs. "Are you alive, or am I seeing all the bloody

ghosts in the world?"

"I'm alive, all right," cried King. "Where can we go? Be quick, Hobbs! Think! Don't sputter like that. want to be personally conducted, and damned quick, at that." "Before God, sir, I 'aven't the idea

where to go," groaned Hobbs. "It's dreadful! Did you see what the wom-

an did back there-

"Don't stop to tell me about it, Keep on running. Go ahead of me. I'm used to following the man from Cook's."

"Right you are, sir. I say, by Jove, I'm glad to see you-I am. You came right up out of the ground as if---'

"Is there no way to get off this beast-ly avenue?" panted King. "They're shooting back there like a pack of wild I hate to think of what's going men.

"Dangloss will 'ave them all in the jug inside of ten minutes, take my word

"They'll have Dangloss hanging from a telephone pole, Hobbs! Don't talk!

Soldiers came riding up from behind, turning to fire from their saddles into the throng of cutthroats led by the grim old man with the bloody sabre. In the centre of the troop there was a flying carriage. The Duke of Perse was lying back in the seat, his face like that of a dead man. Far ahead rattled the royal coach and the wildly flying carriages of state.

"The prince is safe!" shouted King joyously. "They'll make it! Thank

God!"

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Colonel Quinnox turned in his saddle and searched out the owner of that stirring voice.

"Come!" he called, drawing rein as soon as he caught sight of him.

Even as King rushed out into the roadway, a horseman galloped up from the direction of the castle. He pulled his horse to his haunches almost as he was riding over the dodging American.

"Here!" shouted the newcomer, scowling down upon the young man. "Swing up here! Quick, you fool!"

It was Vos Engo, his face black with fury. Quinnox had seized the hand of Mr. Hobbs, on seeing help for King, and was pulling him up before him. There was nothing for Truxton to do but to accept the timely help of his rival. An instant later, he was up behind him, and they were off after the last of the dragoons.

"If you don't mind, count, I'll try my luck," grated the American. Holding on with one arm, he turned and emptied his revolver in the direction of

the howling crowd of rascals.

"Ride to the barracks gates, Vos Engo!" commanded Colonel Quinnox. "Be prepared to admit none but the Royal Reserves, who are under standing orders to report there in time of need."

"God grant that they may be able to come," responded the count. Over his shoulder he hissed to his companion: "It was not idle heroics, my friend, nor philanthropy on my part. I was commanded to come and fetch you. She would never have spoken to me again if I had refused."

"She? Ah, yes; I see. Good! She did not forget me!" cried Truxton, his

heart bounding.

"My own happiness depends on my

luck in getting you to safety," rasped the count. "My life's happiness. Understand, damn you, it is not for you that I risk my life."

"I understand," murmured Truxton, a wry smile on his white lips. "You mean, she is going to pay you in some way for picking me up, eh? Well, I'll put an end to that. I'll drop off again. Then you can ride on and tell her I wouldn't be a party to the game."

wouldn't be a party to the game."

"You would, eh?" said the count angrily. "I'd like to see you drop off while we're going at this——"

"I've got my pistol in the middle of your back," grated Truxton. "Slow up a bit, or I'll scatter your vertebræ all over your system. Pull up!"

"As you like," cried Vos Engo. "I've done my part. Colonel Quinnox will bear witness." He began pulling his horse down. "Now, you are quite free to drop off."

Without a word, the American swung his leg over and slid to the ground, "Thanks for the lift you've given me," he called up to the astonished officer.

"Don't thank me," sang out his would-be savior, as he put spur to his horse.

It is a lamentable thing to say, but Truxton King's extraordinary sacrifice was not altogether the outgrowth of heroism. We have not been called upon at any time to question his courage; we have, on the other hand, seen times when he displayed the most arrant foolhardiness. I defy any one to prove, however, that he ever neglected an opportunity to better himself by strategy at the expense of fortitude. Therefore, it is not surprising that even at such a time as this we may be called upon to record an example of his spectacular cunning.

Be sure of it, he did not decide to slide from Vos Engo's horse until he saw a way clear to better his position, and at the same time to lessen the glory of his unpleasant rescuer.

Less than a hundred yards behind, loped a riderless horse; the dragoon who had sat the saddle was lying far back in the avenue, a bullet in his

head. Hobbling to the middle of the road, the American threw up his hands and shouted briskly to the bewildered animal. Throwing his ears forward in considerable doubt, the horse came to a standstill close at hand. Five seconds later King was in the saddle and tearing along in the wake of the retreating guard, his hair blowing from his forehead, his blood leaping with the joy of achievement.

Mr. Hobbs afterward informed him that Count Vos Engo's oaths were

worth going miles to avoid.

"We need such men as King!" cried Colonel Quinnox, as he waited inside the gates for the wild rider. A moment later, King dashed through, and the massive bolts were shot.

As he pulled up in front of the steward's lodge, to await the orders of the colonel, the exultant American completed the soliloquy that began with the mad impulse to ride into port under

his own sails.

"I'll have to tell her that he did a fine thing in coming back for me, much as he hated to do it. What's more, I shan't say a word about his beastly temper. We'll let it pass. He deserves a whole lot for the part he played. I'll not forget it. Too bad he had to spoil it all by talking as he did. But, hang me, if he shall exact anything from her because he did a thing he didn't want to do. I took a darned sight bigger chance than he did, after all. Good Lord, what a mess I would have been in if the nag hadn't stopped! Whew! Well, old boy, you did stop, God bless you! Colonel," he spoke, as Quinnox came up, "do you think I can buy this He's got more sense than I horse?

Small bodies of foot soldiers and policemen fighting valiantly against great odds, were admitted to the grounds during the next half hour. Scores had been killed by the fierce, irregular attack of the revolutionists; others had become separated from their comrades and were even now being hunted down and butchered by the infuriated followers of Marlanx. A hundred or more of the reserves reached the upper gates

before it occurred to the enemy to blockade the streets in that neighborhood. General Braze, with a few of his men, bloody and heartsick, was the last of the little army to reach safety in the castle grounds, coming up by way of the lower gates from the fortress, which they had tried to reach after the first outbreak.

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The fortress, with all guns, stores, and ammunitions, was in the hands of the Iron Count and his cohorts.

Baron Dangloss had been taken prisoner, with a whole platoon of fighting constables. This was the last appalling bit of news to reach the horrified, disorganized forces in the castle grounds.

Citizens had fled to their homes, unmolested. The streets were empty, save for the armed minions of the Iron Count. They rushed hither and thither in violent detachments, seeking out the men in uniform, yelling and shooting

like unmanageable savages.

Before two o'clock the city itself was in the hands of the hated enemy of the crown. He and his aliens, malefactors all, were in complete control of the fortress, the gates and approaches, the tower and the bloody streets. A thousand of them-eager, yelling ruffiansmarched to within firing distance of the castle walls and held every approach against reënforcements. Except for the failure to destroy the prince and his counselors, the daring, unspeakable plans of Count Marlanx had been attended by the most horrifying results. He was master. There was no question as to that. The few hundred souls in the castle grounds were like rats in a trap.

A wise as well as a cruel man was Marlanx. He lost no time in issuing a manifesto to the stunned, demoralized citizens of Edelweiss. Scores of criers went through the streets during the long, wretched afternoon, announcing to the populace that Count Marlanx had established himself as dictator and military governor of the principality—pending the abdication of the prince and the beginning of a new and substantial régime. All citizens were commanded to recognize the authority of

the dictator; none except those who disobeyed or resented this authority would be molested. Traffic would be resumed on the following Monday. Tradespeople and artisans were commanded to resume their occupations under penalty of extreme punishment in case of refusal. These and many other edicts were issued from Marlanx's temporary headquarters in the plaza-almost at the foot of the stillveiled monument of the beloved Princess Yetive.

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Toward evening, after many consultations and countless reports, Marlanx removed his headquarters to the tower. He had fondly hoped to be in the castle long before this. His rage and disappointment over the stupid miscarriage of plans left no room for conjecture as to the actual state of his feelings. For hours he had raved like a madman. Every soldier who fell into his hands

was shot down like a dog. The cells and dungeons in the great old tower were now occupied by bruised, defeated officers of the law. Baron Jasto Dangloss, crushed in spirit and broken of body, paced the blackest and narrowest cell of them all. The gall and wormwood that filled his soul were not to be measured by words. He blamed himself for the catastrophe; it was he who had permitted this appalling thing to grow and burst with such sickening results. In his mind, there was no doubt that Marlanx had completely overthrown the dynasty, and was in full possession of the government. He did not know that the prince and his court had succeeded in reaching the castle, whose walls and gates were well-nigh impregnable to assault, even by a great army.

Late in the evening, he received a visit from Marlanx, the new master.

The Iron Count, lighted by a ghostly lantern in the hands of a man, who, ten hours before, had been a prisoner within these very walls, came up to the narrow grating that served as a door and gazed complacently upon the once great minister of police.

"Well," said Dangloss, his eyes snapping, "what is it, damn you?"

Marlanx stroked his chin and smiled "I believe this is my old confrère, Bar-on Dangloss," he remarked, "Dear me, I took you, sir, to be quite impeccable. Here you are, behind the bars. Will wonders never cease?

Dangloss merely glared at him.

The Iron Count went on suavely: "You heard me, baron. Still, I do not require an answer. How do you like your new quarters? It may please you to know that I am occupying your office, and also that noble suite overlooking the plaza. I find myself most agreeably situated. By the way, baron, I seem to recall something to mind as I look at you. You were the kindly disposed gentleman who escorted me to the city gates a few years ago, and there turned me over to a detachment of soldiers, who, in turn, conveyed me to the border. If I recall the occasion rightly, you virtually kicked me out of

the city. Am I right?"
"You are!" was all that the bitter Dangloss said, without taking his fierce gaze from the sallow face beyond the

"I am happy to find that my memory is so good," said Marlanx.

"I expect to be able to repeat the operation," said Dangloss.

"How interesting! You forget that history never repeats itself."

"See here, Marlanx, what is your Speak up! I'm not afraid of Do you intend to take me out

and shoot me at sunrise?" "Oh, dear me, no! That would be a silly proceeding. You own vast estates in Graustark, if I mistake not, just as I did eight or nine years ago. Well, I have come into my own again. The crown relieved me of my estates, my citizenship, my honor. I have waited long to regain them. Understand me, Dangloss; I am in control, now; my word is law. I do not intend to kill you. It is my intention to escort you to the border and kick you out of Graustark. See for yourself how it feels. Everything you possess is to be taken away from you. You will be a wanderer on the face of the earth—a pauper. All you have is here. Therein lies the distinction; I had large possessions in other lands. I had friends and a following, as you see. You will have none of these, baron."

"A splendid triumph, you beast!" "Of course, you'd much prefer being

"Not at all. Banish me, if you please; strip me of all I possess. But I'll come back another day, Count Marlanx." "Ah, yes; that reminds me. I had

quite forgotten to say that the first ten years of your exile are to be spent in the dungeons at Schloss Marlanx. How careless of me to have neglected to state that in the beginning. In ten years you will be seventy-five, baron. An excellent time of life for one to begin his wanderings over the world which will not care to remember him."

"Do you expect me to get down on my knees and plead for mercy, you scoundrel?"

"I know you too well for that, my dear baron."

"Get out of my sight!"

"Pray do not forget that I am governor of the tower at present. I go and come as I choose."

"God will punish you for what you have done. There's solace in that.

"As you like, baron. If it makes it easier for you to feel that God will take a hand in my humble affairs, all well and good. I grant you that delectable privilege."

Baron Dangloss turned his back upon his smiling enemy, his body quivering

with passion.

"By the way, baron, would you care to hear all the latest news from the seat of war? It may interest you to know that the castle is besieged in most proper fashion. No one——"

"The castle besieged? Then, by the Eternal, you did not take the prince!"

"Not at all! He is in the castle for a few hours of imaginary safety. Tonight my men will be admitted to the grounds by friends who have served two masters for a twelvemonth or

"Traitors in the castle?" cried Dangloss in horror. He was now facing the

count.

"Hardly that, my dear sir. Agents, I should call them. Isn't it splendid?"

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"You are a-

"Don't say it, baron. Save your breath. I know what you would call me, and can save you the trouble of shouting it, as you seem inclined to do."

"Thank God, your assassins not only failed to dynamite the boy, but your en, God is with Prince Robin, after all!"

"How exalted you seem, baron! It is a treat to look at you. Oh, another thing; the Platanova girl was not my assassin."

"That's a lie!"

"You shall not chide me in that fashion, baron. You are very rude. No; the girl was operating for what I have since discovered to be the Committee of Ten, leading the Party of Equals in Graustark. To-morrow morning I shall have the Committee of Ten seized and shot in the public square. We cannot harbor dynamiters and assassins of that There are two score or more of anarchist sympathizers here. We will cheerfully shoot all of them-an act that you should have performed many days ago, my astute friend. It might have saved trouble. They are a dangerous element in any town. Those whom I do not kill I shall transport to the United States, in exchange for the Americans who have managed to lose themselves over here. A fair exchange, you see. Moreover, I hear that the United States Government welcomes the Reds if they are white instead of yellow. Clever, but involved, eh? Well, good night, baron. Sleep well. I expect to see you again after the rush of business attending the adjustment of my own particular affairs. In a day or two, I shall move into the castle. You may be relieved to know that I do not expect to find the time to kick you out of Graustark under a week or ten

"My men? What of them? The brave fellows who were taken with me?

You will not deprive-

"In time they will be given the choice of serving me as policemen or serving

the world as examples of folly. Rest easy concerning them. Ah, yes, again I have stupidly forgotten something. Your excellent friend, Tullis, will not reënter Edelweiss alive. That is quite assured, sir. So you see, he will, after all, he better off than you. I don't blame him for loving my wife. It was my desire to amicably trade my wife off to him for his charming sister, but the deal hangs fire. What a scowl! I dare say you contemplate saying something bitter, so I'll retire. A little later on I shall be chatting with the prince at the castle. I'll give him your gentlest felicitations."

But Marlanx was doomed to another disappointment before the night was over. The castle gates were not opened to his forces. Colonel Quinnox apprehended the traitors in time to prevent the calamity. Ten hostlers in the royal stables were taken red-handed in the attempt to overpower the small guard at the western gates. Their object was made plain by the subsequent futile movement of a large force of men at that particular point.

Prince Robin was safe for the night.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Count Marlanx was a soldier. He knew how to take defeat and to bide his time; he knew how to behave in the hour of victory and in the moment of rout. The miscarriage of a detail here and there in this vast, comprehensive plan of action did not in the least sense discourage him. It was no light blow to his calculations, of course, when the designs of an organization separate and distinct from his own failed in their purpose. It was part of his plan to hold the misguided Reds responsible for the lamentable death of Prince Robin. The people were to be given swift, uncontrovertible proof that he had no hand in the unforeseen transactions of the anarchists, who, he would make it appear, had by curious coincidence elected to kill the prince almost at the very hour when he planned to seize the city as a conqueror.

His own connection with the opera-

tions of the mysterious Committee of Ten was never to be known to the world. He would see to that.

At nine o'clock, on Sunday morning, a small group of people gathered in the square; a meeting was soon in prog-ress. A goods box stood over against the very spot on which Olga Platanova died. An old man began haranguing the constantly growing crowd, made up largely of those whose curiosity surpassed discreetness. In the group might have been seen every member of the Committee of Ten, besides a full representation of those who, up to now, had secretly affiliated with the Party of Equals. A red flag waved above the little, excited group of fanatics close to the goods-box rostrum. One member of the committee was absent from this. their first public espousal of the cause. Later on we are to discover who this man was. Two women in bright red waists were crying encouragement to the old man on the box, whose opening sentences were an unchanted requiem

for the dead martyr, Olga Platanova. In the midst of his harangue, the hand of William Spantz was arrested in one of its most emphatic gestures. A look of wonder and uncertainty came into his face as he gazed, transfixed, over the heads of his hearers in the direction of the tower.

Peter Brutus was approaching, at the head of a group of aliens, all armed and marching in ominously good order. Something in the face of Peter Brutus sent a chill of apprehension into the very soul of the old armorer.

And well it may have done so. "One moment!" called out Peter Brutus, lifting his hand imperatively. The speaker ceased his mouthings. "Count Marlanx desires the immediate presence of the following citizens at his office in the tower. I shall call off the names." He began with William Spantz. The name of each of his associates in the Committee of Ten followed. After them, came a score of names, all of them known to be supporters of the anarchist cause.

"What is the business, Peter?" demanded William Spantz.

"Does it mean we are to begin so soon the establishing of the new order --- " began Anna Cromer, her face aglow.

Peter smiled wanly.

"Do not ask me," he said, emphasizing the pronoun. "I am only commanded to bring the faithful few before

"But why the armed escort?" growled Julius Spantz, who had spent an unhappy twenty-four hours in bondage.

'To separate the wheat from the chaff," said Peter. "Move on, good people, all you whose names were not called." The order was to the few timid strangers who were there because they had nowhere else to go. They scattered like chaff.

Ten minutes later every member of the Committee of Ten, except Peter Brutus, was behind lock and bar, together with their shivering associates, all of them dumbly muttering to themselves the awful sentence that Marlanx

had passed upon them.

"You are to die at sunset. Graustark still knows how to punish assassins. She will make an example of you to-day that all creatures of your kind, the world over, will not be likely to forget in a century to come. There is no room in Graustark for anarchy. I shall wipe it out to-day."

"Sir, your promise!" gasped William Spantz. "We are your friends—the true Party of——"

"Enough! Do not speak again! Captain Brutus, you will send criers abroad to notify the citizens that I, Count Marlanx, have ordered the execution of the ringleaders in the plot to dynamite the prince. At sunset, in the square. Away with the carrion!"

Then it was, and not till then, that the Committee of Ten found him out! Then it was that they came to know Peter Brutus! What were their thoughts, we dare not tell; their shrieks and curses were spent against impenetrable floors and walls. Baron Dang-loss heard, and, in time, understood. Even he shrank back and shuddered.

It has been said that Marlanx was a soldier. There is one duty that the soldier in command never neglects; the duty to those who fell while fighting bravely for or against him. Sunday afternoon a force of men was set to work, burying the dead and clearing the pavements. Those of his own non-descript army who gave up their lives on the twenty-sixth were buried in the public cemeteries. The soldiers of the crown, as well as the military police, were laid to rest in the national cemetery, with honors befitting their rank, Each grave was carefully marked and a record preserved. In this way, Marlanx hoped to obtain his first footing in the confidence and esteem of the citi-The unrecognizable corpse of Olga Platanova was buried in quicklime outside the city walls. There was something distinctly gruesome in the fact that half a dozen deep graves were dug alongside hers, hours before death came to the wretches who were to occupy them.

At three o'clock, the Iron Count coolly sent messengers to the homes of the leading merchants and bankers of the city. They, with the priests, the doctors, the municipal officers, and the manufacturers were commanded to appear before him at five o'clock for the purpose of discussing the welfare of the city and its people. Hating, yet fearing him, they came; not one but felt in his heart that the old man was undisputed ruler of their destinies. Hours of horror and despair, a night and a day of bitter reflection, had brought the trembling populace to the point of seeing clearly the whole miserable situation. The reserves were powerless; the Royal Guard was besieged and greatly outnumbered; the fortress was lost. There was nothing for them to do but temporize. Time alone could open the way to salvation.

Marlanx stated his position clearly. He left no room for doubt in their minds. The strings were in his hands; he had but to pull them. The desire of his life was about to be attained. Without hesitation, he informed the leading men of the city that he was to be the

Prince of Graustark.
"I have the city," he said calmly.

"The farms and villages will fall in line. I do not worry over them. a very short time I shall have the castle. The question for you to decide for yourselves is this; will you be content to remain here as thrifty, peaceable citizens, protecting your fortunes and being protected by a man and not by a child? If not, please say so. The alternative is in the hands of the crown. I am the crown. The crown may at any time confiscate property and banish malcontents and disturbers. A word to the wise, gentlemen. Inside of a week, we will have a new government. You will not suffer under its administration. I should be indeed a fool to destroy the credit or injure the integrity of my own dominion. But, let me say this, gentlemen," he went on after a pause, in which his suavity gave way to harshness, "you may as well understand at the outset that I expect to rule here. I will rule Graustark or destroy her."

The more courageous in his audience began to protest against the high-handed manner in which he proposed to treat them. Not a few declared that they would never recognize him as a prince of the realm. He waited, as a spider waits, until he thought they had gone far enough. Then he held up his hand and commanded silence.

"Those of you who do not expect or desire to live under my rule-which, I promise you, shall be a wise one-may leave the city for other lands just as soon as my deputies have completed the formal transfer of all your belongings to the crown treasury—all, I say, even to the minutest trifle. Permit me to add, in that connection, gentlemen, the transfer will not be a prolonged affair."

They glared back at him and subsided into bitter silence.

"I am well aware that you love little Prince Robin. Ha! You may not cheer here, gentlemen, under penalty of my displeasure. It is quite right that you should, as loyal subjects, love your prince, whoever he may be. I shall certainly expect it. Now, respecting young Master Robin, I have no great desire to kill him."

He waited to see the effect of this brutal announcement. His hearers stiffened, and-yes, they held their breath.

"He has one alternative—he and his lords. I trust that you, as sensible gentlemen, will find the means to convey to him your advice that he seize the opportunity I shall offer him to escape with his life. No one really wants to see the little chap die. Let me interrupt myself to call to your attention the fact that I am punishing the anarchists at sunset. This to convince you that assassination will not be tolerated in Graustark. To resume; the boy may return to America where he belongs. He is more of an American than one of us. I will give him free and safe escort to the United States. Certain of his friends may accompany him; others whom I shall designate will be required to remain here until I have disposed of their cases as I see fit. These conditions I shall set forth in my manifesto to the present occupant of the castle. If he chooses to accept my kindly terms, all well and good. If not, gentlemen, I shall starve him out, or blow the castle down about his smart little ears. You shudder! Well, I can't blame you. shudder myself sometimes when I think There will be a great deal of of it. royal blood, you know. Ah, that reminds me; it may interest you to hear that I expect to establish a new nobility in Graustark. The present house of lords is objectionable to me. I trust I may now be addressing at least a few of the future noble lords of Graustark. Good day, gentlemen. Kindly inform me if any of my soldiers or followers overstep the bounds of prudence. Rapine and ribaldry will not be tolerated."

The dignitaries and great men of the city went away, dazed and depressed, looking at each other from bloodshot eyes. Not one friend had Marlanx in that group, and he knew it well. He did not expect them to submit at once or even remotely. They might have smiled whereas they frowned if they could have seen him pacing the floor of his office, the moment the doors closed behind their backs, clinching his hands,

and cursing furiously.

At the castle, the deepest gloom prevailed. It was like a nightmare to the beleaguered household, a dream from which there seemed to be no awakening. Colonel Quinnox's first act after posting his forces in position to repel attacks from the now well-recognized enemy, was to make sure the safety of his royal master. Inside the walls of the castle grounds he, as commander of the Royal Guard, ruled supreme. General Braze tore off his own epaulets and presented himself to Quinnox as a soldier of the file; lords and dukes, pages and ministers followed the example of the head of the war department. No one stood on the dignity of his position; no one does, as a rule, with the executioner staring him in the face. Every man took up arms for the defense of the castle, its prince, and its lovely women.

Prince Robin, quite recovered from his fright, donned the uniform of a colonel of the Royal Dragoons, buckled on his jeweled sword, and, with boyish zeal, demanded Colonel Quinnox's reasons for not going forth to slay the

rioters.

"What is the army for, Colonel Quinnox?" he asked, with impatient won-

der.

It was late in the afternoon, and the prince was seated in the chair of state, presiding over the hurriedly called council meeting. Notably absent were Baron Dangloss and the Duke of Perse. Chief officers of the guard and the commissioned men of the army were present—that is, all of them who had not gone down under the treacherous fire.

"Your highness," said the colonel bitterly, "the real army is outside the walls, not inside. We are a pitiful handful—less than three hundred men, all told, counting the wounded. Count Marlanx heads an army of several

thousand. He---"

"He wants to get in here so's he can kill me? Is that so, Colonel Quinnox?" The prince was very pale, but quite

"Oh, I wouldn't put it just that way, your—"

"Oh, I know. You can't fool me. I've always known that he wants to kill me. But how can he? That's the question; how can he when I've got the Royal Guard to keep him from doing it? He can't whip the Royal Guard. Nobody can. He ought to know that."

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His perfect, unwavering faith in the guard was the same that had grown up with every Prince of Graustark and would not be gainsaid. A score of hearts swelled with righteous pride, and as many scabbards rattled as heels clicked and hands went up in salute.

"Your highness," said Quinnox, with a glance at his fellow officers, "you may rely upon it, Count Marlanx will never reach you until he has slain every man in the Royal Guard."

"And in the army—our poor little army," added General Braze.

"Thank you," said the prince. "You needn't have told me. I knew it." He leaned back in the big chair, almost slipping from the record books on which he sat, a brave scowl on his face. "Gee, I wish he'd attack us right now," he said, with ingenuous bravado.

The council of war was not a lengthy one. The storm that had arisen out of a perfectly clear sky was briefly discussed in all its phases. No man there but realized the seriousness of the situation. Count Halfont, who seemed ten years older than when we last saw

him, addressed the cabinet.

"John Tullis is still outside the city walls. If he does not fall into a trap through ignorance of the city's plight, I firmly believe he will be able to organize an army of relief among the peasants and villagers. They are loyal. The mountaineers and shepherds, wild fellows all, are the ones who have fallen into the spider's net. Count Marlanx has an army of aliens; they are not even revolutionists. John Tullis, if given the opportunity, can sweep the city clear of them. My only fear is that he may be tricked into ambush before we can reach him. No doubt Marlanx, in devising a way to get him out of the city, also thought of the means to keep him out."

"We must get word to Tullis," cried

several in a breath. A dozen men volunteered to risk their lives in the attempt to find the American in the hills. Two men were chosen-by lot. They were to venture forth that very night.

"My lords," said the prince, as the council was on the point of dissolving, "is it all right for me to ask a question now?

"Certainly, Robin," said the prime

"Well, I'd like to know where Mr. King is.'

"He's safe, your highness," said Quinnox.

"Aunt Loraine is worried, that's all. She's sick, you see—awful sick. Do you think Mr. King would be good enough to walk by her window, so's she can see for herself? She's in the royal bedchamber.'

"The royal bedchamber?" gasped the high chamberlain.

"I gave up my bed, right off, but she won't stay in it. She sits in the window most of the time. It's all right about the bed. I spoke to nurse about it. Besides, I don't want to go to bed while there's any fighting going on. So, you see, it's all right. Say, Uncle Caspar, may I take a crack at old Marlanx with my new rifle if I get a chance? I've been practicing on the target range, and Uncle Jack says I'm a reg'lar Buffalo Bill."

Count Halfont unceremoniously hugged his wriggling grandnephew. A cheer went up from the others.

"Long live Prince Robin!" shouted Count Vos Engo.

Prince Robin looked abashed. don't think I could hit him," he said, with becoming modesty. They laughed aloud. "But, say, don't forget about Mr. King. Tell him I want him to parade most of the time in front of my windows."

"He has a weak ankle," began Colonel Quinnox lamely.

"Very difficult for him to walk," said Vos Engo, biting his lips.

The prince looked from face to face, suspicion in his eyes. It dawned uponhim that they were evading the point.

A stubborn line appeared between his

"Then I command you, Colonel Quinnox, to give him the best horse in the stables. I want him to ride.'

"It shall be as you command, your

highness."

A few minutes later, his granduncle, the prime minister, was carrying him down the corridor; Prince Robin was perched upon the old man's shoulder, and was in a thoughtful mood.

"Say, Uncle Caspar, Mr. King's all

right, isn't he?"
"He is a very brave and noble gentleman, Bobby. We owe to his valor the life of the best boy in all the world,"

"Yes, and Aunt Loraine owes him a lot, too. She says so. She's been cry-ing, Uncle Caspar. Say, has she just got to marry Count Vos Engo?"

"My boy, what put that question

into your mind?"

"She says she has to. I thought only princes and princesses had to marry people they don't want to.'

"You should not believe all that you hear."

Bobby was silent for twenty steps. Then he said: "Well, I think she'll make an awful mistake if she lets Mr. King get away."

"My boy, we have other affairs to trouble us at present without taking up

the affairs of Miss Tullis." "Well, he saved her life, just like they do in story books," protested the

prince. "Well, you run in and tell her this minute that Mr. King sends his love to

her and begs her to rest easy. See if it doesn't cheer her up a bit." "Maybe she's worried about Uncle Tack. I never thought about that," he

faltered. "Uncle Jack will come out on top,

never fear," cried the old man. Half an hour later, Truxton King, shaven and shorn, outfitted and polished, received orders to ride for twenty minutes back and forth across the plaza. He came down from Colonel Quinnox's rooms in the officers' row, considerably mystified, and mounted the handsome bay that he had brought through the gates. Haddan, of the guard, rode with him to the plaza, but could offer no explanation for the curi-

ous command.

Five times the now resentful American walked his horse across the plaza. directly in front of the terrace and the great balconies. About him paced guardsmen, armed and alert; on the outer edge of the parade ground a company of soldiers were hurrying through the act of changing the guard; in the lower balcony excited men and women were walking back and forth, paying not the least attention to him. Above him frowned the gray, lofty walls of the castle. No one was in view on the upper balcony, beyond which he had no doubt lay the royal chambers. He had the mean, uncomfortable feeling that people were peering at him from remote windows.

Suddenly a small figure in bright red and gold and waving a tiny sword appeared at the rail of the broad upper gallery. Truxton blinked his eyes once or twice, and then doffed his hat. The

prince was smiling eagerly.

"Hello!" he called.

Truxton drew rein directly below him.

"I trust your highness has recovered from the shock of to-day," he responded. "Are you quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you." He hesitated for a moment, as if in doubt. Then: "Say, Mr. King, how's your

leg?"
Truxton looked around in sudden embarrassment. A number of distressed, white-faced ladies had paused in the lower gallery, and were staring at him in mingled curiosity and alarm. He instantly wondered if Colonel Quinnox's riding clothes were as good a fit as he had been led to believe through Hobbs and others.

"It's-it's fine, thank you," he called up, trying to subdue his voice as much

as possible.

Bobby looked a trifle uncertain. His glance wavered, and a queer little wrinkle appeared between his eyes. He lowered his voice when he next spoke.

"Say, would you mind shouting that

a little louder?" he called down, leaning well over the rail.

Truxton flushed. He was pretty sure that the prince was not deaf. was no way out of it, however, so he repeated his communication.

"It's all right, your highness."

Bobby gave a quick glance over his shoulder at one of the broad windows. Truxton distinctly saw the blinds close with a convulsive jerk.

"Thanks! Much obliged! by!" sang out the prince gleefully. He waved his hand, and then hopped off the chair on which he was standing. Truxton heard his little heels clatter

across the stone balcony.
"Well, I'm—by Jove, I understand!" He rode off toward the barracks, his head swimming with joy, his heart jumping like mad. At the edge of the parade ground, he turned in his saddle and audaciously lifted his hat to the girl, who, to his certain knowledge, was standing behind the telltale blind.

"Cheer up, Hobbs!" he sang out in his new-found exuberance, as he rode up to the dismal Englishman, who moped in the shade of the stable walls. "Don't be downhearted. Look at me! Never say die, that's my motto."

"That's all very well, sir," Hobbs, removing the unlighted pipe from his lips, "but you 'aven't got a dog and a parrot locked up in your rooms with no one to feed them. It makes me sick, 'pon my soul, sir, to think of them dying of thirst and all that, and me here safe and sound, so

to speak."

That night, Haddan and a fellow subaltern attempted to leave the castle grounds by way of the private gate in the western wall, only to be driven back by careful watchers on the outside. A second attempt was made at two o'clock. This time they went through the crypt into the secret underground passage. As they crawled forth into the blackest of nights, clear of the walls, they were met by a perfect fusillade of rifle shots. Haddan's companion was shot through the leg and arm, and it was with extreme difficulty that the pair succeeded in regaining the passage

and closing the door. No other attempt was made that night. Sunday night a quick sortie was made, it being the hope of the besieged that two selected men might elude Marlanx's watchdogs during the mêlée that followed. Curiously enough, the only men killed were the two who had been chosen to run the gauntlet in the effort to reach John Tullis.

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On Monday morning the first direct word from Count Marlanx came to the castle. Under a flag of truce, two of his men were admitted to the grounds. They presented the infamous ultimatum of the Iron Count. In brief, it announced the establishment of a dictatorship pending the formal assumption of the crown by the conqueror. With scant courtesy the Iron Count begged to inform Prince Robin that his rule was at an end. Surrender would result in his safe conduct to America, the home of his father; defiance would just so surely end in death for him and all of his friends. The prince was given twenty-four hours in which to surrender his person to the new governor of the city. With the expiration of the time limit mentioned, the castle would be shelled from the fortress, greatly as the dictator might regret the destruction of the historic and well-beloved structure. No one would be spared if it became necessary to bombard; the rejection of his offer of mercy would be taken as a sign that the defenders were ready to die for a lost cause. would cheerfully see to it that they

The defenders of the castle tore his message in two, and sent it back to him without disfiguring it by a single word in reply. The scornful laughter which greeted the reading of the document by Count Halfont did not lose any of its force in the report which the truce hearers carried to the Iron Count

died as quickly as possible, in order that the course of government might

not be obstructed any longer than nec-

No one in the castle was deceived by Marlanx's promise to provide safe conduct for the prince. They knew that

the boy was doomed if he fell into the hands of this iniquitous old schemer. More than that, there was not a heart among them so faint that it was not confident of eventual victory over the usurper. They could hold out for weeks against starvation. Hope is an able provider.

A single, distant volley at sunset had puzzled the men on guard at the castle. They had no means of knowing that the Committee of Ten and its wretched friends had been shot down like dogs in the public square. Peter Brutus was in charge of the squad of executioners.

Soon after the return of Marlanx's messengers to the tower, a number of carriages were observed approaching in Castle Avenue. They were halted a couple of hundred yards from the gate, and once more a flag of truce was presented. There was a single line from Marlanx:

I am sending indisputable witnesses to bear testimony to the thoroughness of my conquest.

MARLANX.

Investigation convinced the captain of the guard that the motley caravan in the avenue was made up of loyal, representative citizens from the important villages of the realm. They were admitted to the grounds without question.

The Countess Prandeville of Ganlook, terribly agitated, was one of the first to enter the haven of safety, such as it was. After her, came the mayors and the magistrates of a dozen villages, Count Marlanx's reason for delivering these people over to their friends in the castle was at once manifest.

By the words of their mouths his almost complete mastery of the situation was conveyed to the prince's defenders. In every instance, the representative from a village sorrowfully admitted that Marlanx's men were in control. Ganlook, an ancient stronghold, had been taken without a struggle, by a handful of men. The countess' husband was even now confined in his own castle under guard.

The news was staggering. Count Halfont had based his strongest hopes on the assistance that would naturally come from the villages. Moreover, the strangely commissioned emissaries cast additional gloom over the situation by the report that mountaineers, herdsmen, and woodchoppers in the north were flocking to the assistance of the Iron Count, followed by hordes of outlaws from the Axphain hills. They were swarming into the city. These men had always been thorns in the sides of the crown's peacemakers.

"It is worse than I thought," said Count Halfont, after listening to the words of the excited magistrates. "Are there no loyal men outside these walls?"

"Thousands, sir, but they are not organized. They have no leader, and but little with which to fight against

such a force."

"It is hard to realize that a force of three or four thousand desperadoes has the power to defy an entire kingdom. A city of seventy-five thousand people in the hands of hirelings! The shame of it!"

Truxton King was leaning against a column not far from the little group, nervously pulling away at the pipe Quinnox had given him. As if impelled by a common thought, a half dozen pairs of eyes were turned in his direction. Their owners looked as quickly away, again moved by a common thought.

The minister of mines gave utterance to a single sentence that might well have been called the epitome of that shrewd, concentrated thought:

"There must be some one who can get to John Tullis before it is too late."

They looked at one another, and then once more at the American who had come among them, avowedly in quest of adventure.

## CHAPTER XX.

Truxton King had been in a resentful frame of mind for nearly fortyeight hours. In the first place, he had not had so much as a single glimpse of the girl he now worshiped with all his heart. In the second place, he had learned, with unpleasant promptness, that Count Vos Engo was the officer in command of the House Guard, a position as gravely responsible as it was honorable. The cordon about the castle was so tightly drawn in these perilous hours that even members of the household were subjected to examination on leaving or entering.

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Truxton naturally did not expect to invade the castle in search of the crumb of comfort he so ardently desired; he did not, however, dream that Vos Engo would deny him the privilege of staring at a certain window from a rather prim retreat in a far corner of the plaza.

He had, of course, proffered his services to Colonel Quinnox. The colonel, who admired the Americans, gravely informed him that there was no regular duty to which he could be assigned, but that he would expect him to hold himself ready for any emergency. In case of an assault, he was to report to Count Vos Engo.

"We will need our bravest men at the castle," he had said. Truxton glowed under the compliment. "In the meantime, Mr. King, regain your strength in the park. You show the effect of imprisonment. Your adventures have been most interesting, but I fancy they invite rest for the present."

It was natural that this new American should become an object of tremendous interest to every one in and about the castle. The story of his mishaps and his prowess was on every lip; his timely appearance in Regengetz Circus was regarded in the light of divine intervention, although no one questioned the perfectly human pluck that brought it about. Noble ladies smiled upon him in the park, to which they now repaired with timorous hearts; counts and barons slapped him on the back, and doughty guardsmen actually saluted him with admiration in their

But he was not satisfied. Loraine had not come forward with a word of greeting or relief; in fact, she had not appeared outside the castle doors. Strangely enough, with the entire park at his disposal, he chose to frequent those avenues nearest the great bal-

conies. More than once, he visited the grotto where he had first seen her; but it was not the same. The occasional crack of a rifle on the walls no longer fired him with the interest he had felt in the beginning. Forty-eight hours had passed, and she still held aloof. What could it mean? Was she ill? Had she collapsed after the frightful strain?

Worse than anything else; was she devoting all of her time to Count Vos

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Toward dusk, on Monday, long after the arrival of the refugees, he sat in gloomy contemplation of his own unhappiness, darkly glowering upon the unfriendly portals from a distant stone

A brisk guardsman separated himself from the knot of men at the castle doors, and crossed the plaza toward

"Aha," thought Truxton warmly, "at last she is sending a message to me. Perhaps she's-no, she couldn't be sending for me to come to her.'

Judge his dismay and anger when the soldier, a bit shamefaced himself, briefly announced that Count Vos Engo had issued an order against loitering in . close proximity to the castle. King was inside the limit described in the order. Would he kindly retire to

a more distant spot, etc.

Truxton's cheek burned. He saw in an instant that the order was meant for him and for no one else—he being the only outsider likely to come under the head of "loiterer." A sharp glance revealed the fact that not only were the officers watching the little scene, but others in the balcony were looking on.

Resisting the impulse to argue the point, he hastily lifted his hat to the spectators, and turned into the avenue

without a word.

"I am sorry, sir," mentioned the

guardsman earnestly.

Truxton turned to him with a frank smile, meant for the group at the steps. "Please tell Count Vos Engo that I am the last person in the world to disregard discipline at a time like this."

His glance again swept the balcony,

suddenly becoming fixed on a couple near the third column. Count Vos Engo and Loraine Tullis were standing there together, unmistakably watching his humiliating departure. To say that Truxton swore softly as he hurried off through the trees would be unnecessarily charitable.

The next morning he encountered Vos Engo near the grotto. Two unsuccessful attempts to leave the castle grounds had been made during the

night. Truxton had aired his opinion to Mr. Hobbs after breakfast.

"I'll bet my head I could get away with it," he had said, doubly scornful because of a sleepless night. "They go about it like a lot of chumps. No won-

der they are chased back.

Catching sight of Vos Engo, he hastened across the avenue and caught up to him. The count was apparently deep

in thought.

"Good morning," said Truxton from behind. The other whirled quickly. He did not smile as he eyed the tall American. "I haven't had a chance to thank you for coming back for me last Saturday. Allow me to say that it was a very brave thing to do. If I appeared ungrateful at the time, I'm sure you understood my motives,

"The whole matter is of no consequence, Mr. King," said the other

quietly.

"Nevertheless, I consider it my duty to thank you. I want to get it out of my system. Having purged myself of all that, I now want to tell you of a discovery that I made last evening.

"I am not at all interested." "You will be when I have told you, however, because it concerns you.

"I do not like your words, Mr King, or the way in which you glare at me.

"I'm making it easier to tell you the agreeable news, Count Vos Engo; that's all. You'll be delighted to hear that I thought of you nearly all night, and still feel that I have not been able to do you full justice."
"Indeed?" with a distinct uplifting of

the eyebrows.

"Take your hand off your sword, please. Some other time, perhaps; but not in these days when we need men, not cripples. I'll tell you what I have discovered, and then we'll drop the matter until some other time. We can af-ford a physical delay, but it would be heartless to keep you in mental suspense. Frankly, count, I have made the gratifying discovery that you are a damned cur.

Count Vos Engo went very white. He drew his dapper figure up to its full height, swelled his robin-redbreast coat to the bursting point, and allowed his right hand to fly to his sword. Then, as suddenly, he folded his arms and

glared at Truxton.

"As you say, there is another and a better time. We need dogs as well as

men in these days."

"I hope you won't forget that I thanked you for coming back last Saturday."

The count turned and walked rapidly

away.

Truxton leaned against the low wall alongside the allée. "I don't know that I've helped matters any," he said to himself ruefully. "He'll not let me get within half a mile of the castle, after this. If she doesn't come out for a stroll in the park, I fancy I'll never see her. Heigh-ho! I wish something would happen! Why doesn't Marlanx begin bombarding? It's getting devilish monotonous here."

He strolled off to the stables, pick-

ing up Mr. Hobbs on the way. "Hobbs," he said, "we've got to find John Tullis, that's all there is to it." He was scowling fiercely at a most inoffensive lawn mower in the grass at

"I dare say, sir," said Mr. Hobbs, with sprightly decisiveness. "He's very much needed."

"I'm going to need him before long as my second."

"Your second, sir? Are you going

to fight a duel?"

"I suppose so," lugubriously. "It's too much to expect him to meet me with bare fists. Oh, Hobbs, I wish we could arrange it for bare knucks!" He delivered a mighty swing at an invisible adversary. Hobbs' hat fell off

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with the backward jerk of surprise.
"Oh, my word!" he exclaimed admiringly. "Wot a punch you've got!"

Later on, much of his good humor was restored and his vanity pleased by a polite request from Count Halfont to attend an important council in the "Room of Wrangles," that evening at

Very boldly, he advanced upon the castle a few minutes before the appointed hour. He went alone, that he might show a certain contempt for Count Vos Engo. Notwithstanding the fact that he started early enough for the chamber, he was distressingly late

for the meeting.

He came upon Loraine Tullis at the edge of the terrace. She was walking slowly in the soft shadows beyond the row of lights on the lower gallery. King would have passed her without recognition, so dim was the light in this enchanted spot, had not his ear caught the sound of a whispered exclamation. At the same time, the girl stopped abruptly in the darkest shadow. He knew her at a glance, this slim girl in spotless white.

"Loraine!" he whispered, reaching her side in two bounds. She put out her hands and he clasped them. quick, hysterical little laugh came from her lips. Plainly, she was confused. "I've been dying for a glimpse of you.

Do you think you've treated me—"
"Don't, Truxton," she pleaded, suddenly serious. She sent a swift glance toward the balconies. "You must not come here. I saw-well, you know. I was so ashamed. I was so sorry."

He still held her hands. His heart

was throbbing furiously.

"Yes, they ordered me to move on, as if I were a common loafer," he said, with a chuckle. "But I'm used to it. They ran me out of Meshed for taking snapshots; they banished me from Damascus, and they all but kicked me out of Jerusalem—I won't say why. But where have you kept yourself? Why have you avoided me? After getting the prince to parade me in front of your windows, too. It's dirt mean, Loraine."

"I have been ill, Truxton-truly, I have," she said quickly, uneasily.

"See here, what's wrong? You are in trouble. I can tell by your man-ner. Tell me—trust me."

"I am worried so dreadfully about

she faltered.

"That isn't all," he declared, "There's something else. What promise did you make to Vos Engo last Saturday after -well, if you choose to recall it-after I brought you back to him-what did you promise him?"

"Don't be cruel, Truxton," she pleaded. "I can not forget all you have

done for me.

"You told Vos Engo to ride back and pick me up," he persisted. "He told me, in so many words. Now, I want a plain answer, Loraine. Did you promise to reward him if he-well, if he saved me from the mob?"

She was breathlessly silent for a moment. "No," she said, in a low voice. "What was it, then? I must know, Loraine." He was bending over her

imperiously.

"I am very—oh, so very unhappy, Truxton," she murmured. He was on the point of clasping her in his arms and kissing her. But he thought better of it.

"I came near spoiling everything just now," he whispered hoarsely.

"What?" "I almost kissed you, Loraine-I swear it was hard to keep from it. That would have spoiled everything."
"Yes, it would," she agreed quickly.

"I'm not going to kiss you until you have told me you love Vos Engo."
"I—I don't understand," she cried,

drawing back and looking up into his face with bewildered eyes.

"Because, then I'll be sure that you

"Be sensible, Truxton."

"I'll know that you promised to love him if he'd save me. It's as clear as day to me. You did tell him you'd marry him if he got me to a place of safety."

"No. I refused to marry him if he did not save you. Oh, Truxton, I am so miserable. What is to become of all of us? What is to become of John, and Bobby-and you?"

"I-I think I'll kiss you now, Loraine," he whispered, almost tremulously. "God, how I love you, little darling!"

"Don't!" she whispered, resolutely pushing him away, after a sweet second of indecision. "I cannot—I cannot, Truxton, dear. Don't ask me to-to do that. Not now, please-not now!"

He stiffened; his hands dropped to his sides, but there was joy in his voice.

"I can wait," he said gently. "It's only a matter of a few days; and I —I won't make it any harder for you just now. I think I understand. You've-you've sort of pledged yourself to that-to him, and you don't think it fair to-well, to any of us. I'm including you, you see. I know you don't love him, and I know that you're going to love me, even if you don't at this very instant. I'm not a very stupid person, after all. I can see through things. I saw through it all when he came back for me. That's why I jumped from his horse and took my chances elsewhere. He did a plucky thing, Loraine, but I-I couldn't let it go as he intended it to be. Confound him, I would have died a thousand times over rather than have you sacrifice yourself in that way. It was splendid of you, darling, but-but very foolish. You've got yourself into a dreadful mess over it. I've got to rescue you all over again. This time, thank the Lord, from a castle."

She could not help smiling. His joy-

ousness would not be denied.

"How splendid you are!" she said, her voice thrilling with a tone that

could not be mistaken.

He put his hands upon her shoulders and looked down into the beautiful, upturned face, a genuinely serious note creeping into his voice when he spoke again.

"Don't misconstrue my light-heartedness, dearest. It's a habit with me, not a fault. I see the serious side to your affair-as you view it. You have promised to marry Vos Engo. You'll have to break that promise. He didn't save me. Colonel Quinnox would have accomplished it, in any event. He can't hold you to such a silly pledge. You -you haven't by any chance told him that you love him?" He asked this, in sudden anxiety.

"Really, Truxton, I cannot discuss

"No, I'm quite sure you haven't," he announced contentedly. "You couldn't have done that, I know. Now, I want you to make me a promise that you'll keep."

"Oh, Truxton-don't ask me to say that I'll be your-" She stopped,

painfully embarrassed.

"That will come later," he said consolingly. "I want you to promise, on your sacred word of honor, that you'll kiss no man until you've kissed me." "Oh!" she murmured, utterly speech-

"Promise!"

"I—I cannot promise that," she said, in tones almost inaudible. "I am not sure that I'll ever-ever kiss anybody. How silly you are!"

"I'll make exception in the case of your brother-and, yes, the prince." "I'll not make such a promise," she

"Then, I'll be hanged if I'll save you from the ridiculous mess you've gotten yourself into," he announced, with finality. "Moreover, you're not yet safe from old Marlanx. Think it over, my

"Oh, he cannot seize the castle-it is impossible!" she cried, in sudden ter-

"I'm not so sure about that," he said

laconically.

"What is it you really want me to say?" she asked, looking up with sudden shyness in her starry eyes.

"That you love me—and me only, Loraine," he whispered.

"I will not say it," she cried, breaking away from him. "But," as she ran to the steps, a delicious tremor in her voice, "I will consider the other thing you ask."

"Darling-don't go," he cried, in eager, subdued tones, but she already was halfway across the balcony. In a

moment she was gone. "Poor, har-assed little sweetheart," he murmured, with infinite tenderness. For a long time he stood there, looking at the window through which she had disappeared, his heart full of song.

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Then, all at once, he remembered the meeting. "Great Scott!" in dismay. "I'm late for the powwow." A twisted smile stole over his face. "I wonder how they've managed to get along without me." Then he presented himself, somewhat out of breath, to the attendants at the south doors, where he had been directed to report. A moment later, he was in the Castle of Graustark, following a stiff-backed soldier through mediæval halls of marble, past the historic staircase, down to the door of the council chamber.

He was filled with the most delicious sensation of awe and reverence. Only in his dearest dreams had he fancied himself in theee cherished halls. And now, he was there-actually treading the same mosaic floors that had known the footsteps of countless princes and princesses, his nostrils tingling with the rare incense of five centuries, his blood leaping to the call of a thousand romances. The all but mythical halls of Graustark-the sombre, vaulted, timedefying corridors of his fancy. Somewhere in this vast pile of stone was the girl he loved. Each shadowy nook, each velvety recess seemed to glow with the wizardry of love lamps that had been lighted with the building of the castle. How many hearts had learned the wistful lesson in these aged halls? How many loves had been sheltered here?

He walked on air. He pinched himself-and even then was not certain that he was awake. It was too good

to be true.

He was ushered into a large, sedately furnished room. A score of men were there before him—sitting or standing in attitudes of attention, listening to the words of General Braze. King's entrance was the signal for an immediate transfer of interest. The general bowed most politely and at once turned to Count Halfont, with the remark that he had quite finished his suggestions. The prime minister came forward to greet the momentarily shy American. King had time to note that the only man who denied him a smile of welcome was Count Vos Engo. He promptly included his rival in his own sweeping, self-conscious smile.

"The council has been extolling you, Mr. King," said the prime minister, leading him to a seat near his own. Truxton sat down, bewildered. "We may some day grow large enough to adequately appreciate the invaluable service you have performed in behalf

of Graustark."

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Truxton blushed. He could think of nothing to say, except: "I'm sorry to have been so late. I was detained." Involuntarily he glanced at Vos Engo. That gentleman started, a curious light leaping into his eyes.

"Mr. King, we have asked you here for the purpose of hearing the full story of your experiences during the past two weeks, if you will be so good as to relate them. We have had them piecemeal. I need not tell you that Graustark is in the deepest peril. If there is a single suggestion that you can make that will help her to-night, I assure you that it will be given the most grateful consideration. Graustark has come to know and respect the resourcefulness and courage of the We have seen American gentleman. him at his best."

"I have really done no more than to—er—save my own neck," said Truxton simply. "Any one might be excused for doing the same. Graustark owes a great deal more to Miss Tullis than it does to me, believe me, my lords. She had the courage, I the

strength."

"Be assured of our gratitude toward Miss Tullis," said Halfont, in reply. "Graustark loves her. It can do no more than that. It is from Miss Tullis that we have learned the extent of your valorous achievements. Ah, my dear young friend, she has given you a fair name. She tells us of a miracle and we are convinced."

Truxton stammered his remon-

strances, but glowed with joy and

ride.

"Here is the situation in a nutshell," went on the prime minister. "We are doomed unless succor reaches us from the outside. We have discussed a hundred projects. While we are inactive, Count Marlanx is gaining more power and a greater hold over the people of the city. We have no means of communication with Prince Dantan of Dawsbergen, who is our friend. We seem unable to get warning to John Tullis, who, if given time, might succeed in collecting a sufficient force of loyal countrymen to harass and eventually overthrow the dictator. Unless he is reached before long, John Tullis and his combined force of soldiers will be ambushed and destroyed. I am loath to speak of another alternative that has been discussed at length by the ministers and their friends. Duke of Perse, from a bed of pain and anguish, has counseled us to take steps in the direction I am about to speak of. You see, we are taking you into our confidence, Mr. King.

"We can appeal to Russia in this hour of stress. Moreover, we may expect that help will be forthcoming. But we will have to make an unpleasant sacrifice. Russia is eager to take over our new issue of railway bonds. Hitherto, we have voted against disposing of the bonds in that country, the reason being obvious. St. Petersburg wants a new connecting line with her possessions in Afghanistan. Our line will provide a most direct route—a cut-off, I believe they call it. Last year the Grand Duke Paulus volunteered to provide the money for the construction of the line from Edelweiss north to Balak, on condition that Russia be given the right to use the line in connection with her own roads to the Orient. You may see the advantage in this to Russia. Mr. King, if I sent word to the Grand Duke Paulus, agreeing to his terms, which still remain open to us, signing away a most valuable right in what we had hoped would be our own individual property. we have every reason to believe that

he will send armed forces to our relief, on the pretext, that Russia is defending properties of her own. That is one way in which we may oust Count Marlanx. The other lies in the ability of John Tullis to give battle to him with our own people carrying the guns. I am confident that Count Marlanx will not bombard the castle, except as a last resort. He will attempt to starve us into submission first; but he will not destroy property if he can help it. I have been as brief as possible. Lieutenant Haddan has told us quite lately of a remark you made, which he happened to overhear. If I quote him correctly, you said to the Englishman Hobbs that you could get away with it, meaning, as I take it, that you could succeed in reaching John Tullis. remark interested me, coming as it did from one so resourceful. May I not implore you to tell us how you would go about it?"

Truxton had turned a brick red. Shame and mortification surged within him. He was cruelly conscious of an undercurrent of ironv in the premier's courteous request. For an instant, he was sorely crushed. A low laugh from the opposite side of the room sent a shaft to his soul. He looked up. Vos Engo was still smiling. In an instant, the American's blood boiled; his manner changed like a flash; blind, unreasoning bravado succeeded embarrass-

He faced Count Halfont coolly, almost impudently. "I think I was unfortunate enough to add that your men were going about it—well, like ama-teurs," he said, with a frank smile. "I meant no offense." Then he arose suddenly, adjusted his necktie with the utmost sang-froid, and announced:

"I did say I could get to John Tullis. If you like, I'll start to-night."

His words created a profound impression, they came so abruptly. The men stared at him, then at each other. It was as if he had read their thoughts and had jumped at once to the con-clusion that they were baiting him. Every one began talking at once. Soon some one began to shake his hand.

Then there were cheers and a dozen handshakings. Truxton grimly realized that he had done just what they had expected him to do.

"You will require a guide," said Colonel Quinnox, who had been studying the dégagé American in the most ear-

nest manner.
"Send for Mr. Hobbs, please," said

A messenger was sent posthaste to the barracks. The news already was spreading throughout the castle. chamber door was wide open, and men were coming and going. women were peering through the doorway for a glimpse of the American.

"There should be three of us," said King, addressing the men about him. "One of us is sure to get away."

"There is not a man here-or in the service-who will not gladly accompany you, Mr. King," cried General Braze quickly.

"Count Vos Engo is the man I would choose, if I may be permitted the honor of naming my companion," said Truxton, grinning inwardly, with a malicious joy.

Vos Engo turned a yellowish green.

His eyes bulged.

"I-I am in command of the person of his royal highness," he stammered,

suddenly going very red.

"I had forgotten your present occupation," said Truxton quietly. "Pray pardon the embarrassment I may have caused you. After all, I think Hobbs will do. He knows the country like a book. Besides, his business in the city must be very dull just now. He'll be glad to have the chance to personally conduct me for a few days. As an American tourist, I must insist, gentlemen, on being personally conducted by a man from Cook's."

They did not know whether to laugh or to treat it as a serious announce-

Mr. Hobbs came. That is to say, he was produced. It is doubtful if Mr. Hobbs ever fully recovered from the malady commonly known as stage fright. He had never been called Mr. Hobbs by a prime minister before, nor

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had he ever been asked in person by a minister of war if he had a family at home. Moreover, no assemblage of noblemen had ever condescended to unite in three cheers for him. Afterward, Truxton King was obliged to tell him that he had unwaveringly volunteered to accompany him on the perilous trip to the hills. Be sure of it, Mr. Hobbs was not in a mental condition for many hours to even remotely comprehend what had taken place. He only knew that he had been invited, as an English gentleman, to participate in a council

But Mr. Hobbs was not the kind to falter, once he had given his word; however hazy he may have been at the moment, he knew that he had volunteered to do something. Nor did it seem to surprise him when he finally found out what it was.

"We'll be off at midnight, Hobbs,"

said Truxton. "As you say, Mr. King, just as you say," said Hobbs, with fine indifference,

As Truxton was leaving the castle, ten minutes later, Hobbs having gone before to see to the packing of food bags and the filling of flasks, a brisk, eager-faced young attendant hurried up to him.

"I bear a message from his royal highness," said the attendant, detain-

ing him.

"He should be sound asleep at this time," said Truxton, surprised.

"His royal highness insists on staying awake as long as possible, sir. It is far past his bedtime, but these are troublous times, he says. Every man should do his part. Prince Robin has asked for you, sir."
"How's that?"

"He desires you to appear before him at once, sir."

"In-in the audience chamber?" "In his bedchamber, sir. He is very sleepy, but says that you are to come to him before starting away on your mis-

sion of danger." "Plucky little beggar!" cried Truxton, his heart swelling with love for the royal youngster.

"Sir!" exclaimed the attendant, his eyes wide with amazement and reproof. "I'll see him," said the other prompt-

ly, as if he were granting the audience. He followed the perplexed attendant up the grand staircase, across thickly carpeted halls, in which posed statuesque soldiers of the Royal Guard, to the door of the prince's bedchamber. Here he was confronted by Count Vos Engo.

"Enter," said Vos Engo, with very poor grace, standing aside. The sentinels ground their arms, and Truxton King passed into the royal chamber,

alone.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

# CHRISTMAS SONG

THERE once the glade was green, No green is now, Save for the beryl sheen Where gleams the holly bough.

White—all a glistening white, Save that one bough That in the Christmas light Glimmers and shimmers now!

Glows like the love of Him, (Perennial bough!) Who 'mid the seraphim Supreme sits throned now!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



I.



Y DEAR STRALE: I have just been looking through my Christmas number and trying to judge it as if I were the reader instead of the editor. The verdict is only partly favorable.

It is magnificent; but it isn't Christmas! And this applies to your own story.

Do you know you used to write very Christmassy stories years ago; grown-up fairy tales that no one would believe for fifty-one weeks in the year. But for one week we can believe anything that is kind and generous. I mean the week when I shall keep Christmas with all my children round the table—and an extra table stuck on!—and a wonderful grandbaby, in a high-chair dug out from the lumber room. Once a year the pessimist becomes an optimist. An optimist editor must cater for optimist readers and give them generous fare.

and give them generous fare.

Can't you find your old Christmas spirit during that week, and plan a story for our next Christmas number?

A real old-fashioned story of snow and Santa Claus, holly and ivy, peace and good will on earth, the prodigal returned, and old feuds forgotten? We shall all be the better for reading it, and you none the worse for writing it. A very happy Christmas to you.

Yours sincerely, W. READ. II.

My Dear Miss Bryant: I gave an advance copy of our Christmas number to my wife, as representing the intelligent general public. She echoed a criticism that I had made myself; that it was a good number, with nothing more charming than your pretty little story; but it wasn't Christmas!

I feel that she is right, and that just at this season we want the story of things that ought to be; the story that is too good to believe all the rest of the year; the story that nobody wrote better then year.

better than you.

Next year I propose to have a number full of real Christmas stories, like those you wrote before you were so well known. I hope that the coming season will inspire you to write something for me in the real Christmas spirit. It is always a pleasure to publish work of yours.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas, Yours sincerely, W. READ.

#### III.

My Dear Read: You are a lucky man! I have no boys and girls to sit round an elongated table, and no laughing grandbaby to crow in an old high-chair. The table that I "sat round" is gone these many years. I write as I am; older and sadder and—worst of all!—wiser. I have no Christmas spirit to mix with my ink.

If you want a real Christmas number, next year, look for jolly writers

with jolly wives and jolly boys and girls; and especially for such as are blessed with an active grandbaby to rattle a spoon and chase crumbs upon the table of a resuscitated high-chair. The Christmas spirit is a family spirit. He shuns old bachelors like me!

With all good wishes for you and Yours sincerely, JOHN STRALE.

## IV.

My DEAR MR. READ: We write as we feel. In the days when I wrote the real Christmas stories, I had a real Christmas. I went home. It was a real home. Oh! Very real!

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Now, my real Christmas story would have to be of some staid people who played staid bridge; or, perhaps, of a woman who stopped in her flat alone, and spent the day writing-let us say, "Why I Am Not a Suffragette." That, at any rate, would show that she retained the spirit of a woman; and, being such, she would wish that the old things were; wish it very much.

Yours sincerely, ALICE BRYANT.

My DEAR STRALE: May I offer to provide you with some Christmas spirit? I wish you would come to us and study a new grandbaby in an old highchair. Apart from the literary results -it is a most inspiring baby !- I should be glad if an old-fashioned family Christmas were a pleasure to you. It would be pleasing to me to meet the private man after our business friendship of many years.

My wife joins me cordially in the invitation. Yours sincerely, W. READ.

## VI.

My DEAR MISS BRYANT: My husband has shown me your letter; and now I understand your stories better. Will you come and spend Christmas with us? We are just simple people, but I think we can make you feel that this Christmas you have a home. Please come. Yours sincerely, MARY READ.

## VII.

DEAREST ELISE: \* \* but I have finally decided upon pink

I've one disturbing piece of news. Father and mother have invited two old frumps of authors to stay with us. They are fearfully clever and celebrated; John Strale and Alice Bryant, in fact! It appears that they have grown too frumpy and grumpy to write cheerful stories for Christmas numbers. So they are to come here to be drenched with the "Christmas Spirit," until it oozes out of their pens. However, I don't suppose they will trouble us Mother has evidently made much. up her mind that they are to dose each other! It's her one wickedness-marrying people off-and she's a dear old "mum." I'm going to sprinkle them with some of my best spirits-I hope they won't be too strong for the poor old things!-just to please her.

Good-by, you dear. The second Christmas that we haven't to go back to school! Hurrah!

> Your faithful friend. NORAH READ.

P. S.—Do you remember the Christmas card we sent to the French master? And the dreadful valentine!

## VIII.

My DEAR NAN: \* \* \* \* \* I expect it's nothing but the teething,

Our two authors have turned out very nice. They aren't nearly so old as I thought. Mr. Strale is barely thirty-five, and Miss Bryant is only one and thirty. We all like them very much; and between ourselves, my dear, I think they only wanted throwing to-gether. Your loving sister,

MARY READ. P. S .- I am so glad that Ted is com-I am sure he lives too much with his books. He brought a lot here, but Norah seized them, and locked them up. She always could do anything with him from the time that she was a baby. She is very wild, but she is wonderfully fond of her uncle.

#### IX.

My Dear Sis: The heathen idol arrived safely. He is just the sort of fellow that I like—although I should like anything that came from old Dick and you! He shall squat in my study and give me your blessing. At least, I hope that his many hands are extended for blessing, not spanking! If you had seen me this Christmas, you might think the latter necessary! I haven't had such a romp since the old days at home.

I am at Read's; my first editor, and still my best. Three days here have carried me back to my youth. The curious thing is that he asked me because my Christmas story lacked the Christmas spirit, and he thought that he could provide me with it. Well, I shall have planty for next year.

shall have plenty for next year. Every rite of Christmas has been duly observed. There has been a pudding with three pennies and a thimble in it. I got the thimble—a very proper thing for a bachelor, they told me. There have been forfeits, and snap dragon, and hunt the slipper, and blindman's buff. There are lively boys and lively girls—the liveliest is Norah Read, a perfect imp of twenty. There is mistletoe in many places, and it is put to its proper uses. There is a foot of snow on the ground, and this afternoon we went out snowballing. You should have seen Alice Bryant, the novelist-whom I have always considered a model for Miss Prim!-rosy and screaming, with her hat knocked off, and throwing with both hands! You should have seen me—the grave writer of stories with a purpose-when a snowslide from the roof knocked me flat!

Miss Bryant is really a very wonderful woman; a better talker than writer even. Equally wonderful are the imp—such a kindly imp!—and the "grandbaby." The grandbaby and I are frankly in love with each other. She is thirteen months old, and her imp aunt and I spend hours teaching her to walk.

There is one thing among us most wonderful of all; the Christmas spirit! Every one is a friend—even our enemies!

Ah! You lucky people who have a family to keep the Christmas spirit alive all the year. Do you know, sis, I'd like to settle down, if I could induce some one to settle with me.

My best love to you all.
Your affectionate brother,
JOHN STRALE.

#### X.

My DEAR AUNT: I am so glad that you are so happy with your old friends, and that my invitation here set you free to go. You were quite right, dear, when you reproached me for growing old too quickly; but I have grown young again at a marvelous pace, since I came here. The boys make me romp like a girl. I have even snowballed and screamed! Mr. Strale-the novelist, you know-pelted me most unmercifully; but fate sent an avalanche from the house top upon him, and I helped the rescue party pull him out! You wouldn't think that such a clever man -he really is fascinatingly cleverwould be so boyish, and laugh so wholeheartedly. We all laugh here, from Mr. Read down to the grandbaby; a delightful creature of thirteen months, and in love with John Strale. Dickie, aged nine, is in love with me! Professor Morris-Mrs. Read's brotheris another interesting character. It is marvelous what he knows. He thinks he is a misogynist!

I have decided not to have the Persian kitten. Mr. Strale says that I am only "a two-cat old maid!" Really I don't think I ought to have a third—yet! Your loving niece,

## ALICE BRYANT.

## XI.

DEAR OLD NAN: We are having a splendid time, and I do wish that you could run over. Ted has quite got over his depression, and has been as cheerful as any one. He does not even mind

Alice Bryant; and you know his aversion to women. It would be difficult for any one to dislike her, she is so bright and amusing. She teases him about being a dry old professor, as we should never dare to do!

Yesterday, Mr. Strale hired two huge boxes and four big motors and took us all to the theatre. Norah was delighted because he drove one himself and let her help. He is a dear fellow; and I really believe I shall marry him to Alice. Will says they haven't the least idea of it; but men never notice things

like we women do.

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Dolly's baby has been a first-class assistant in entertaining people. Mr. Strale and Norah almost fight over her. I wish sometimes that Norah were a little less reckless. She is her wildest with Mr. Strale, and quite forgets that he is a great man, and doesn't mind what she says or does to him. However, he is too sensible a fellow to be offended by a young girl's lightheartedness.

Will is particularly pleased, because he considers that his two great authors have caught the Christmas spirit from us, and he feels sure of two real Christmas stories for his beloved magazine

next year.

plainly.

Best love to you all.
Your loving sister,
MARY READ.
P. S.—The baby says "Gan" quite

## XII.

Dearest Elise: I was quite wrong about the famous authors. They are neither grumpy nor frumpy. Mr. Strale is only thirty-five, and quite nice-looking; and plays all kinds of jokes on me, and doesn't mind what dreadful things I say or do. Miss Bryant is a dear, and tells wonderful ghost stories. Mother still proposes to marry them off to each other. It is great fun, because they both see what she is after, and neither wants to, and I have persuaded each of them that the other does! Uncle Ted has helped me splendidly. He always does help me in mischief. People don't suspect him be-

cause he's a professor, and looks so

grave and severe. When I tease Miss Bryant about Mr. Strale, she gets quite excited, and says that "two of a trade" would never do. When I tease Mr. Strale, I don't always get the best of it. He says he'd like his wife to know less than himself, and he can't think of any one so ignorant, "present company excepted." say there is the grandbaby; and I'd like to be his aunt! It would be funny if a great author fell in love with me, wouldn't it? I don't mean that he has, Sometimes I rather think of course. he and Miss Bryant do like each other. I wonder! It doesn't matter to me, of Your faithful friend, course.

P. S.—I could like him if I tried. I shouldn't think one author would marry another. Would you?

## XIII.

My DEAR BROWN: I shall be back early in the new year. It is quite impossible to prepare my lectures here. In fact, my niece Norah has confiscated my books! You remember her, I dare say-the little girl who sprinkled us with the watering pot to make us grow! She is a grown-up young lady, now, and a remarkably pretty one, but as full of fun as ever. She assists me in foiling the matchmaking villainies of her mother. The machinations are directed at Strale, the author, and Miss Bryant, the authoress; two very nice people, but absolutely unsuited. They annoy me-the machinations, not the people. However, it might be worse. If Strale were not here, my worthy sister would probably plan to marry me to Miss Bryant. So I have something to be thankful for.

I don't mean that as a reflection upon Miss Bryant. She is a singularly prepossessing and sensible woman, and if a man had the misfortune to get married, the calamity would be alleviated by association with her.

With kind regards,

Yours very truly, E. Morris.

#### XIV.

My DEAR NAN: I am so upset-so terribly upset. I must write to you about it.

Will made his usual speech at dinner-you know that he always does on New Year's Eve; and you know what he always says. Thank Heaven, he can always say the same things; that we have made the past year happy for one another; that we shall make the New Year happy for one another. . . Thank Heaven! . . Oh, Nan. dear! I'm afraid I can't make the New Year happy for my little No-

When Will had finished, John Strale made a speech. I don't think I have heard any one speak quite so wellunless it was Alice Bryant, who spoke afterward. Their speeches were both about "the Christmas spirit"; and they both said the same thing, only he said it right out, and she wrapped it up in a little fairy story; that the spirit of Christmas was just "love," and they had found it here. There was no mistaking what they meant. Will nudged me, and whispered: "You were right, as usual, mother."

I was so glad to think that they had come together; and then I encountered Ted in the passage. He looked white and strange; and when I asked him what was the matter, he turned upon me angrily, and spoke of me as "an interfering matchmaker," and said that he was leaving to-morrow. He is in love with Alice. I am sure of it, my dear. Our poor brother! I would have given anything to see him married to

a good woman like her.

I was so upset that I went up to my room to recover. I found Norah there. She was looking for some scent, because she had a headache, she said. Oh, Nan! If you'd seen her white face! . . . I knew in a moment, and pulled her on my knees, and hugged her as if she was a baby again. I didn't say anything. I knew she couldn't bear to own it. My poor, proud, wild, pretty Norah! . . . He thought she was only a child, of course. I cannot and do not blame John Strale or Alice Bryant. I don't blame myself about Ted-one wouldn't have expected it of him-but I blame myself terribly about Norah. She and Strale played together so much, and he is just the sort of man who would take a young girl's fancy, as I should have known.

Don't write to try to console me, Nan. I can't bear it. I know all about Time's healing; but Norah's hurt won't heal for years. She is like that.

Your miserable sister, MARY.

## XV.

DEAR ELISE: May I come to you for a few days? I want to get away from here. Vours. NORAH.

You may as well know, He did care for her; and I did care for him,

#### XVI.

DEAR BROWN: I am coming back in the afternoon, to start the lectures. Will you tell the housekeeper to get my study ready? Yours very truly, E. Morris.

P. S .- My sister's matchmaking manœuvres have succeeded. Strale and Miss Bryant practically announced it in speeches that they made after dinner to-night. I am sorry, for they are utterly unsuited.

## XVII.

DEAR, DEAR ELISE: It was all a mistake. Jack didn't mean her. He meant me. Me!

The mistake was through a speech he made after dinner last night. I tell him that he can stick to his writing in future, and leave the speaking to me. He talked about the Christmas spirit being love, and finding it here. We all thought he meant Miss Bryant. I went upstairs and upset myself and poor old munmy. When I came down I looked awful; and he followed me into the passage, and caught hold of me, and kissed me. My headache gave him a heartache, he said, because he loved me! I told him it was a good job that my heartache didn't give him a headache, or he'd

have had a frightful one.

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We saw the old year out and the new year in together-we are always going to do that now-and when everybody was wishing everybody else a Happy New Year, Jack said: "Will you wish many happy years to Norah and me?" They all stared at us, except Miss Bryant. She rushed up and hugged me, and laughed quietly, like she does when she is very pleased; and then Uncle Ted laughed right out loud and slapped his leg, and shouted: "What a fool I've been!" And helooked at Miss Bryant, and she went red; and suddenly every one laughed; and Uncle Ted shouted: "Don't stop here to be laughed at," and seized her and whisked her out of the room! He looked so fierce that you would have thought that he was taking her off to execution; but they came back engaged! I am so glad. She is nice enough even for my dear, splendid, old uncle. I never thought he would get married.

Jack says it is all the fault of the Christmas spirit, but I tell him I won't have any excuses of that sort. not going to be a Mormon! He can keep his Christmas spirit of that kind

for his tales-and me!

Oh! I am happy, happy, happy, Elise! I mean to grow ever so sensible—unless he would rather that I didn't. If he likes me best silly, I'll be as silly as a silly can be.
Such a Happy New Year to you,

darling. Your loving.

NORAH.

## XVIII.

## (From The Daily Trumpet.)

We congratulate Mr. Read upon the best Christmas number that we have seen for many years; a real Christmas number, full of tales about Christmas; Christmas kept in the real Christmas spirit, which the most hardened scoffer, in his private mind, holds dear.

It is difficult to select the best of

these good stories; but our choice lies between two. We mean the stories by those excellent writers, "Alice Bryant" and John Strale. There is a family likeness between them, as there should be, for the writers are connected by marriage. Mr. Strale, it will be remembered, recently married the second daughter of Mr. Read; and "Alice Bryant" is now the wife of Mrs. Read's brother, Professor Edward Morris, the famous scientist. Both writers point the moral of the Christmas spirit; one in a plain story, the other in a fairy tale. Let them speak in their own words; and, first, Mrs. Morris' fairy

"The spirit opened his great white wings, and poised upon the tall cliffs, ready to fly across the dark sea of years. The prince and the princess both gave a cry, and besought him to stay; but he looked at them, and shook his head and smiled; and they watched him till he was lost in the clouds that encompass the place that the sun comes from, and the waves of time that never

return.

"And then the princess turned to the prince, and the prince turned to the princess; and she laid her hand upon her heart. 'What he brought,' she said, 'lives here!' And the prince took her 'And you,' in his arms very tenderly. 'And you,' he said, 'live here.' So, by love, we may keep the spirit that comes at Christmas, through the changing year."

John Strale says the same, otherwise.

"The merry face clouded, and the bright eyes dimmed for a moment, and she hung a little heavier to his arm.

"'Christmas is gone,' she said. 'I think-I think Christmas is just loving

as much as you can.

"He drew her a little closer, and smiled down at her; and the cloud broke in a smile, and the eyes sparkled. "'Why!' she cried. 'Of course!

"'Why!' she cried. Christmas is still here!"

So be it. Peace on earth and good will to men; love to our loving; and the spirit of Christmas with us throughout the year. Amen!





HE night was mystically dark, a deep crystalline purple, with the ineffectual gold of stars dusted everyhere over it, save where the new moon's fragile crescent held a sphere of

blackness in its arms.

At the bottom of the donga, where the two men stood, the darkness was denser, as though the dregs of it had settled in that dry, deep ravine, scoured by the fury of the winter rains out of the crumbling sandstone into its labyrinthine and malignant-looking intric-

acv

They had retraced their steps, or rather had slid through them, down the loose slope from the farther brink of the gully, over which they had been peering across the flat country at the scattered lights of a village some half a mile away. They spent a moment extracting the more painful of the thorns they had acquired in their descent, and then the taller of the two took something shaped like a book from his haversack and held it up before the other. To that other, who was his smartest signaler, it at once revealed a small, luminous disk across which an obscuring shutter flashed to and fro. It was the invention of the man who carried it, Captain Maurice Condover, a very simple affair, and permitted the silent transmission of orders by the Morse code at night, when even whispered speech might have been dangerous. Condover was an expert telegraphist, and he had more than once to check the pace of his finger, and repeat a word.

When the message was finally understood he unstrapped from his left arm the sketch block on which he had been working, and handed it, with his haversack and the signaling apparatus, to the other who, on receiving them, turned about at once and crept away into the darkness.

Condover remained for five full minutes as still as a statue, intently listening; then he raised his wrist on which a watch with a faintly glowing face just showed the time. His belt had been shifted in the descent, and he drew it round to bring the handle of the revolver where he could grip it quickly, and straightened its twisted lanyard about his neck.

Then he began to feel his way along the bottom of the donga in the opposite direction from that which his com-

panion had taken.

His movements, alert and definite, had expressed no indecision, yet for the past hour inclination had been struggling with his sense of duty, and only at the last moment had it gained

the upper hand.

He had been sent out with a patrol the moment darkness had fallen to ascertain the position of the Boer pickets, as an attempt was going to be made to carry the position just before dawn. He had ascertained them with unlooked-for completeness, and was forwarding the information to his commanding officer.

The message he had just sent with it described himself as going forward to

ascertain the line of the nearest trench, and as intending to rejoin his command as soon as possible. So far it was true, but his object in locating the trench was unfortunately not connected with his military duties, nor was it on these depended the possibilities of his return. He was indeed trying to discover, not where the trenches were, but where they were not, in order not to attack but to evade them, and the mission on which he was proceeding, which was to carry him into the very centre of the enemy's camp, had no direct relation to the art of war.

Dalsdorp, the village, the lights of which had been visible from the donga, toward which he was now moving, had already been three times occupied by

the opposing armies.

The Boer rear guard had abandoned it without a shot fired; the British main body, after holding it for close on a month, while the railway bridges blown up on the way to it were being repaired, had continued its northern advance, leaving it in the hands of a strong mixed force, which had been surprised and expelled in an undignified confusion. What was left of the rout, hastily reënforced from the lines of communication, was going that night to make a desperate attempt at recapture; for the possession of Dalsdorp was, for the northern army, of an importance impossible to exaggerate, since it was cut off from all supplies so long as the enemy sat there across the railway with its tapering, towering, spindle-shanked bridges, stretched like spider webs of iron across the sandy ravines.

During the British occupancy, Condover, with the intelligence headquarters, had been billeted at one of its few decent houses—that of the ex-landrost—where he had made the acquaintance

of Claire Vaulo.

Her father and three brothers were all with the enemy in the field; she and an aged aunt alone remained in the house. Such a position as hers was of the most pathetic difficulty, falling alternately into the hands of the exasperated combatants; embracing to-day,

with the passionate affection that war breeds, her fighting kinsmen, and forced on the morrow respectfully to entertain the men whose pressing busi-

ness it was to kill them.

Condover had admired from the first the graciousness of her self-control, which accepted the intolerable position with so grave a courtesy that the very services she was forced to render them seemed to insulate her from these enemies of her country, yet without the least showing of antipathy or bitterness.

He had had experience already of other kinds of reception, of the women who glowered with malignant hatred, whom he disliked and forgave; of the poor apathetic creatures, broken with anxiety, whom he profoundly pitied; and of the volatile damsels, who were quite ready to flirt and play the fool with him, as though the deadly ruin of war was a light-hearted picnic.

Claire Vaulo alone had faced the situation with the faultless manners he would have looked for only in a great lady. She came of Huguenot stock, which had borne a Guyenne name up to the last generation. She herself, tall, dark, with a dignified figure, large, luminous eyes, and a firm mouth, showed distinctly her parentage on neither side; one would have guessed her pure Irish before hearing the accent of her clear-shaped English words, and it was the accent and the becoming simplicity of her clothes which alone declared her Gallic origin,

Condover, moved to admiration at the first sight of her, tried to interest her attention, failed, and fell very seri-

ously in love,

He was by no means of indifferent morals, nor given, where women of his own class were concerned, to a light pursuit of the affections. He had had indeed little opportunity for such affairs, being an ardent soldier, and having spent the last ten years at strenuous work in which three wars were included. The temporary attachments he had so far formed were just sufficient to illuminate the different quality of his passion for Claire Vaulo.

He recognized from the first its extreme undesirableness and tried very hard to put it from him. But it had taken an extraordinary hold upon every fibre of his soul and body, so that the effort to free himself seemed to tear at his very being. Then, with characteristic decision, he accepted the event as inevitable, determined that Claire was essential to his happiness, and set

himself to win her.

Since she paid not even sufficient heed to his advances to betray a consciousness of them, there was nothing to flatter his sense of progress, and, being of a combative nature, the very difficulty of such indifference made her seem more desirable. Then came the chance of doing her a signal service. In a skirmish outside Dalsdorp her brother was severely wounded. Condover, discovering his identity, him conveyed to the church which had been turned into a temporary hospital, and, breaking the news to his sister. drove her to the P. M. O. and obtained permission for her to act as a nurse. Claire, deeply touched by his concern and kindness, expressed her gratitude by a shy increase of accessibility, and discovered in the young soldier a spirit very kindred to her own-thoughtful, sensitive, sincere, and inspired with a generous regret for the fate of the men he was fighting. A repentant sense of having been unfair to him joined with her gratitude, and these one morning cleared her eyes for an unforeseen admiring vision of him as a man.

His presence was pressingly required somewhere, and he found on coming out on to the stoop that the half-broken Argentine waiting for him had, while bricking in the roadway, broken the saddle girths beyond immediate repair.

Telling his Jat syce to stand clear, he had vaulted on to the beast's back and been whirled out of sight in a vortex of dust, clattering heels, and

vicious screaming.

Claire, watching him go and fearing disaster, felt a sudden strange tug within her of anxiety and admiration, which grew into exultant relief as the dust storm disappeared from the scene without any dispersion of its elements, Then she felt the place where the tug had been, and was frightened; nothing like it had ever happened to her before.

She kept shyly out of his reach for some days after, and then, hurt by his evident misapprehension of her motive, returned to the more intimate communion into which they had drifted.

It was then that Condover had de-

clared his devotion.

"I'm only telling you," he said; "of course I can't ask for an answer-vet, and a bullet may, any day, save you the need of one. It's just that I couldn't bear you to think that I've been merely amusing myself. I'm as serious as I know how to be, and I can't prove it better than by asking you to marry me. I've never asked or wanted to ask any one else, so that the offer's at least worth its face value. If you haven't vet discovered that I love you, I'll tell you that, too. You should have heard it first, in its proper place, if we hadn't been billeted upon you here, but I was afraid that, from my position, it might sound frivolous or offensive. It can hardly seem that to the woman one begs to be one's wife."

She was visibly moved by the respect and earnestness of his appeal, but she put it at once irrevocably from her. She had, it was clear, never distantly imagined such a thing. Her face flushed and paled, as, under his intent eyes, she explained with all the kindness that she could its impossibility.

He did not discover, despite his intentness, that her heart, like a child startled out of its sleep, was crying out distractedly within her. She hardly

knew it, either.
"Of course," he said gently when she ended, "I knew you would feel like that. It seems almost treachery even to like the enemies of one's country. But these unhappy days won't last forever, and it's for then I want to hope. I haven't tried, have I, to make you think well of me? I haven't breathed a word of how I love you, though it's more than all the rest of life to me now. I didn't mean to press you; I only wished you to know that there's a man who'd sooner hear you wanted him than have the other half of the world."

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"Ah, do not!" she murmured, distressed, perplexed, embarrassed.

"I'm not going to," he responded cheerfully. "I've said what I had to say, but I'll keep what I want to say till you want me to say it."

To the letter of that at least he held to his word; but his eyes, his voice, and the tender deference of his manner made up in eloquence for the ban upon his speech. No calculated subtlety could have helped him more with her than that instinctive consideration, and it was because his lips were so scrupulously silent that her heart urged his

It was in those unhappy days, terrible in their tension, her brother's life, her country's existence both trembling in the balance, that she learned, reluctantly, that she loved this resolute energy of them both

my of them both.

There was even more cause of strain than that, for she had been informed that an attack was intended upon the British position, and she gathered from the conversation of her guests how carelessly that position was being held. She was torn apart between a longing for her kinsmen's triumph, and terror that Condover might be killed in the attack.

She had awful moments, struggling with an overwhelming desire to warn him. But in the end her patriotism, which was a steel core of strength to her, triumphed, and thus, one night, the attack was delivered on a camp, sentineled indeed, but wrapt in a complacent security which made of such vigilance a mere technical routine.

The assault had had to be postponed pending the arrival of a commando, and the sudden outbreak of rifle fire in the darkness was the first certain intimation that Claire had of it. She leaped from her bed, dressing hastily, and listening with a thumping heart to the hurried turning out of the intelligence department in the room below.

Quickly, one after another, its three

members rushed out into the night, shouting orders to the men camped in the yard and garden, and she saw them no more.

Claire opened her window and thrust out her head, regardless of danger, but all she could see were dark shapes of defenders running confusedly here and there, and the yapping, yellow spurts of flame along the inclosing line of skirmishers, drawn into a bunch about the nearest bridge head. When that died out, as it soon did, the attack decreased in front, and freshened on either side of her.

Some horsemen rode up the street—she knew by the trip of the hoofs that they were of her own people—and there followed shortly after, apparently quite disconnected, a loose rabble of infantry running hard, out of breath and out of hand, their hurry explained, as they panted beneath her window, by a sudden angry clatter of rifles at the end of the long street, and the filling of its width with a silken whistling sheaf of bullets.

One of them struck the wall within a yard of her, buzzing off it like an offended bee, and she quickly drew in her head.

Half an hour later, with the first light of dawn, she was again surrounded by her own people, all the different queer kinds of them, glum and impassive, or hysterically talkative and triumphant; some almost in rags, and some in British uniforms, hunger the one thing they had in common.

While they ate she became tremblingly conscious of the change in her condition. She felt no gratitude, no elation; only a consuming anxiety and darkening sense of life. During the long day that followed she was incessant in her assistance to the British wounded that were being brought in, and scanned with tremulous foreboding the faces of the dead.

Condover, so far as she could discover, was among neither; but that meant little. He might have fallen and been carried off by his own men, or dropped wounded to die of exhaustion among the thorns in the tortuous in-

tricacies of those malevolent dongas; as indeed many did, only the vulture-picked bones being left of them. During the days which followed she wandered about the spruits in every direction, with horror gripping her heart at every discovery of the limp heaps of khaki; the unveiling of her love, revealed by each fresh thrill of fear or thankfulness, being accepted by her

aching mind without a protest.

Condover's case was better, since he had fewer fears for her; but, as the moment for the British attack approached, the case was reversed, and his anxieties multiplied. His department had news that the enemy's ammunition was parked close to the Vaulos' house, and the artillery was to concentrate on it as soon as the assault began. That meant the almost certain destruction of her house, and a very small chance at that hour of her escaping unhurt from it. The vision of her loveliness, mangled to a shapeless green mass by damnable lyddite, like bodies he had seen, haunted his days and nights till he could bear it no longer. The love that he had vowed to her must prove stronger than all else in the world, even than the thing which he held most highly, his honor as a soldier. He did not pretend to himself that the sacrifice of that honor could possibly be justified; and his plans for the rescue of the woman he loved were made, not with elation, but with a dull sense of shame.

His one hope was that, if found dead within the enemy's lines—and alive he certainly would not be taken—he might be credited merely with some too daring disobedience of orders in search of valuable information. That brought him to the parting in the donga with his signaler, and his further approach

to the town.

Reckoning that no night attack would be expected by the river bed, he trusted on the Boer trenches ending on either bank. His surmise proved correct, though in crawling along the winding channel he passed close enough to smell the pipe which one of the defenders must have been smoking.

It was a terribly tedious and lacer-

ating business, creeping for an hour on hands and knees through the thorny entanglement of the matted acacias, but once beyond the trenches he walked upright and easily, as less likely, if seen, to attract attention. Thus, unchallenged by the few he met, he found his way to the back of the Vaulos' house. He dared not try to enter it from the street, even had there been no light in the parlor window; and, ignorant how many men the house might harbor, he feared to make a burglarious entry into any room but Claire's.

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For a moment he hesitated. To find her in it, to be found by her, was anything but to his taste. Then the soldier spirit asserted itself; for whatever else he might be there, it was not to play the fool with sentiment. He was a competent gymnast—a big water-butt, and the rain pipe that fed it gave him the lead he wanted. With his knees dug hard against the wall he went up, hand over hand, and thanked Heaven, finding the window sash raised, that Claire was fonder of the night air than were most of her countrywomen.

Scrambling in, he found the room in darkness, but not a sound hinted at oc-

cupation.

He felt his way across it to the opposite window which overlooked the street. The front door was open, light streamed out of it, and in the beam he could see men trailing out from the room under him into the street. They were talking in the Taal, casually and without a hint of apprehension. Claire had followed them on to the stoep; he could hear her soft, clear farewells. Then she came in and shut the door. The house was silent, probably only she and her aunt slept there. All the men were in the trenches.

He heard her footstep on the stair, and debated swiftly how least to startle her. He decided to strike a match, revealing himself as she came into the room. But the scheme was not very successful. Her nerves had been pretty badly strained during those days of search, and when she saw the manwhose shape, if he were not dead as she feared, seemed utterly incredible in her.

bedroom—standing there, looking ghostly enough in the meagre illumination of a flickering vesta, life seemed to ebb out of her; she dropped her candle with a crash, and a sob of terror shook her which had not strength to be

Condover whispered her name with urgent warning, and at the sound of his voice she realized that he still lived. The match went out, and in the darkness, while he struck another, she regained something of her composure, and, by the time he had relit her broken candle, the dread and the wild relief which had succeeded it had both left her eyes.

"Captain Condover, what are you doing here?" she whispered hoarsely.

He pointed in silence to the open, uncurtained windows, and she went across and shut them, drew the curtains over them, and closed the door.

"Now!" she challenged.

"I've come here for you," he said quietly.

"For me?"

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"To take you out of Dalsdorp tonight," he said.

She had set the wobbling candle down upon the table between them, and stood in the dim light of it looking at him, anything but amenably. There were no fashions at Dalsdorp, and the canvas dress she wore was classically simple, the bodice merely folded across her throat, the skirt falling straight to her ankles; it made her look like the incarnate spirit of the The low candlelight enlarged the hollows of her deep-set eyes, and sharpened the shadow of her dented She seemed, standing there in rigid aloofness, deterrently unapproachable.

"To take me out of Dalsdorp?" she repeated, almost with scorn. "Have your soldiers then come back?"

"No," he said; "but they're coming."
"Very well, then," she replied coldly; "they have come before, they did
not harm me."

"No," he admitted, in despair at all this argument; "but then they didn't fight, this time they will. The place will be shelled, burned, turned into a shambles."

She looked at him fixedly. "And this will be to-night?" she asked. "A surprise? And vou come in here to tell me, you who should lead them! How, then, if I tell my people, shall it be a surprise?"

"It won't!" said Condover.

"Yet you come, you tell me the secrets of your side, you make the risk of all your men?"

"If I've risked anything but my life in telling you, I'm a fool as well as a knave," he admitted. "Have I?"

She made an impatient gesture. "You make proof of my honor, but you forget your own. That is not right in a soldier! Have you no shame for yourself?"

"I have," he said sadly; "but it hasn't been able to hinder my love for you."

"And you think to show your love for me so," she protested indignantly, "by climbing up the wall into my window in the middle of the night? How shall it be for me, if one finds you here in this, my bedroom, with the—the schemings upon you of an attack?"

He saw that his account looked black, and that it would be difficult to give it any other sort of appearance.

"Yes," he said simply; "that's how I show it, and if you had ever loved you'd know that I could show it in no other way. My coming here to-night may be all that you've painted it, but life and honer and everything else would have been at an end for me if, by not coming, I'd left you to be killed."

The clear eyes above her shapely straightness softened at his unpretending candor, but there was no yielding in her voice.

"You have done wrong," she said, "and for me also there is blame, because it seemed thus that you could please me. But you do not know the women of my people." There was a quiet pride in the way she said it; she was glad to think he had measured her so falsely by the women of his own. "It is now that you must go. Come! I will see the way clear for you."

She turned to the door, but he made no move to follow her.

"Come!" she repeated, more imperiously. "Do you fear I shall betray you when you are gone?"

"No," he said.

"I shall not," she assured him. "It is perhaps I also that am faithless, as you have been. But you have offered your life for me; I cannot so use it. And the men of my people have seldom need of warnings; it is not they who are surprised."

She moved again to the door, the pride of race in her step as it had been in her eulogy. But Condover drew a rush-bottomed chair from the table and

"I came for you," he said slowly. "I go with you, or not at all."

She turned upon him, a blaze of

wrath in her fine eyes.

"You came in foolishness," she exclaimed, holding back her voice. pardon you; you did not understand. But now, if you stay, it is but to insult me. How dare you think that I should go?

"By my love for you," he said, "and

your love for me.'

"For you!" she cried scornfully. "I have it not. By what conceit is it possible you should think it? You were my friend when you were here, you showed me much kindness; I shall be grateful always. But love? Love is altogether different from that!"

Condover looked gravely up into her eyes. "Is it?" he said. He drew a notebook from his pocket, and opened it upon the table. "Here are plans showing the positions of your people. Here is the courthouse, the church, the street we are in; these wavy blue threads are the rivers, from which your trenches, these straight, black lines, extend east and west about the town. So far, the book gives away nothing to the enemy, but now I'm going to make it valuable." He drew out the lead pencil from its sheath, and, leaning over to the meagre light of the candle, began to draw upon the plan. "This arrow marks the direction of the main British attack to-night, these two smaller ones show where the false attacks will come from. To give more force to it, I can write the strengths of the various columns, the hour at which they start, the countersigns for to-night and tomorrow. There!" He finished writing, and held the book out to her. "For lack of this a certain number of your men are certain to be killed tonight; they may be utterly defeated; the war must be brought to a more decisive end by our rapid recovery of Dalsdorp. If it's true that you don't care for me, give that to your commandant. I shall sit here and put a bullet through my head when they come to arrest me." He laid the book down on her side of the table, and looked up quietly at the reproof and anger in her eyes. It was easier to be cool, because every touch he had added to the plan was fictitious; but she could not know that.

"You should be shamed of yourself!"

she exclaimed hotly.
"I am," he said, "but this is merely a question now of your love and mine. I don't accept your denial. If it's genuine, send Jan Pretorius that!"

She turned half away from him, a

sullen frown upon her face.

"Won't you have it?" he said. "I won't stir hand or foot to stop you. You don't realize what you're doing. You've the safety of Dalsdorp in your hands, and you're throwing it away. Men will be shot in their sleep to-night, and you'll be the cause of it; men that

"Stop!" she cried fiercely.

shall not say it!"

"Why do you let me?" he smiled. "You've only to take these plans of mine. What am I, a man you don't care for, compared with the safety of your own people?" He held out the book again to her. "Why won't you take them?"

"They are not yours to offer me," she returned indignantly. "They are not yours, though you have risked your life for them. They are your commando's, they are your country's. It is those that you would betray.

"Oh, never mind that," he said. "The

bigger villain I am, the less it matters how you use me. It's absurd putting an enemy's honor before the safety of your own kin. Come, you'd better have them!"

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She turned her head away from him. "No," she said, "I will not help you to be a traitor."

"That's because you love me."

"I do not love you!" she declared, with strained intensity. "You have made me false to my people and to myself. I do not love you. I hate

you, even!"
"Very good," he said calmly, "that should make it easier."

As they gazed with that hard challenge into each other's eyes, a pebble flung from the street struck her window. The sharp clack of it transformed instantly the passionate repudiation in her pose to a vigilant alarm.

The head that she had held so high was thrust forward; the hand, clinched at her side, went out in a gesture of imploring caution. So she stood, till a second stone struck the pane. She went over to the window, drew the curtain, and opened it. A man's voice greeted her, another joined it, and another; they were speaking confusedly together in the Taal. Then a deep, rich Irish brogue rolled over them like a wave. Condover guessed it for O'Neill's, the Irish renegade.

"Yes," Claire replied to them in English, evidently that they all might understand, her head half out of the window, which made hearing difficult for Condover, directly behind her, and impossible any catching of the queries to which she replied. "Yes, it is my aunt to whom I speak." Condover started at the glibness of the lie, spoken to cover him, and at the ease of the laugh with which she treated their suspicions. "A Rooi-nek here, in this house! But how . . . the house is closed. myself have locked them. . . . You think that he could climb? But how? . . . By the pipe? The pipe is loose!" She laughed again, as she shook it, and rattled down some roughcast from the wall upon their heads. "Is he a mere cat, that he should come by that?"

There was a longer pause, filled apparently by a relation of the hue and cry which had followed the discovery that an Englishman had succeeded in making his way into the town. He had been tracked from near the trenches into the main street, and had been last seen looking at the Vaulos' house.

"Oh, but certainly," Claire's voice re-joined, in mockery, "you can search the house; but perhaps it might suffice to see that the doors and the windows have not been opened; they all are bolted from within. . . . So? You have seen? Well, do you suppose that he is a ghost? . . . In my room? . . . Oh, certainly, I will see." She came away from the window, and, taking up the candle, moved about the room, as if searching it, keeping her eyes averted from the spot where Condover was sitting, the butt of his revolver lying ready to his hand. Then she went back to the window. "But, of course not! How should it be in such a room as mine? . . . No, I do not! In Dalsdorp, who should hide him? Are we not patriots, all of us? Also, for what should he wish in Dalsdorp to come into a house? He is here to see what commandoes have you, how are held the trenches, or do the burghers sleep. Not to spend the evening with some silly girl. . . . No, certainly you will not find him, looking for him as if he was a slug upon the wall." There followed a laugh at that, Irish most of it, then some merry rejoinder in O'Neill's big voice, and she had thrown them a "G'nacht" and shut the window.

As she turned from it, she stood for a moment as if dazed. Then she dropped into a chair by the table, buried her head in the arms which she flung upon it, and burst into tears.

For a moment Condover watched her in silence, realizing, man though he was, that comfort in such defeat, if indeed it could come from any one, could not come from him; for what was he but her tempter, her accomplice in their

lapse from duty?

But, as she continued crying in utter despair and self-abasement, he put his hand upon her arm.

"Claire!" he urged tenderly.

"Claire!"

"Oh, go away! Go away from me!" she sobbed. "I have betrayed my coun-

try."

"Yes," he said sadly, leaning nearer to her, "we've both done it, you and I, but I did it of my own free will, you because it was forced upon you, because by no other way could you avoid betraying the man who had trusted you. Ah, my dear, it is I only who am to blame for it all. It was I who left you without a choice, because a guest must come even before one's country." He rose, and stood looking down regretfully at the beauty of her bowed head. "Come, let me out! At least I can take out of your sight what has cost so much to you."

She looked up at him in quick alarm.

"What do you mean?" she cried.
"To go," he said. "Is there anything else left for me?"

"To go!" she exclaimed. "But where? They search for you."

"Yes," he said, "and they'll probably find me. What does it matter, what does anything matter, now that I've lost

you?"

If he had urged his love upon her then, she would probably, in her despair and wretchedness, have repulsed it even more vehemently than she had before. If he had instanced that betrayal of her country for his sake as proof of her love for him, she would have repudiated fiercely such an interpretation. But this sudden, unlooked-for capitulation, with its as unforeseen transference of anxiety from his side to hers, struck not at the front she had prepared to meet him, but at the vital and undefended line of her communications.

She stood up quickly before him, unheeding the tears that still filled her

eves.

"I do not understand," she protested. "You are come here to save me, yes?

Well? And now you go-also to save

"I am going because you haven't any use for me," he said. "I came because

I thought perhaps you had."

"Use for you!" she retorted, her voice and temper rough-edged with anxiety. "Tell me, I pray you, what I have done that you should so punish me? Is it not enough that I have lied for you to my own people, that you go now, as though I drove you, like a dog, away?"

"Claire!" he exclaimed, astonished.

"Claire!" he exclaimed, astonished.
"Do you wish that I should always have to say: 'It is I that have killed him; it is I that sent him that he should be shot in the street'?"

"What do you want me to do?" he

asked quietly.

"What is there but one thing that I should want?" she returned, still speaking excitedly. "Make not all that I have done be for nothing. Stay here till it is safe!"

Condover turned the watch on his wrist to the dim light of the candle. "Five minutes more," he said; "that's the outside I can give myself."

"You think nothing but of yourself," she exclaimed angrily. "You come here, you forsake your duty, to save me for yourself; and now you go, you go back to your duty, to save that for yourself, too. That is what matters to you! Not at all that, first, by your coming, you make me a traitor, and now, by your going, you—you break my heart!"

Utterly unlooked for as was that climax, as the sob broke her voice, his arms were about her. "Claire!" he murmured to her bent head repentantly. "Claire! You care like that!"

She made no answer, sobbing out the strain and misery of that hour upon his shoulder. He tried to soothe her, but mere kindly admonition had no effect while the burden of his determined peril still weighed upon her.

"Listen, dearest!" he said, at last. "It's all true that you've said to me, but it shan't be, any more. I'd no business, after coming here, to think of any one but you. Don't cry any

more; I'll do whatever you tell me. I've parted with any right to worry about my honor."

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This second capitulation had upon her exactly the effect of the first. He had, it seemed, only to renounce his claims for her at once to espouse them.

Her head went back, she looked him

proudly in the eyes.
"No!" she said. "You shall go. It was for me you gave away your honor, so it is from me you shall have it again.

"Come?" he exclaimed, astounded.

She checked herself as she was turning from him.

"But, certainly," she replied. "Do you suppose it is alone that I let you

But he would not hear of her coming with him after what had happened. He told her that it was merely doubling the danger for both of them; that he only asked her to go for the night to a safer part of the town; that he would have to fight if he were discoveredand she would probably be killed by mistake in the scrimmage.

While he reasoned, she, paying no heed to him, had lifted her sunbonnet from a peg, drawn her cloak from a cupboard, and begun to dress herself. Then, leaving his talk to hang unheeded in the air, she quitted the room abruptly, returning with a man's cloak, like the one she was wearing. She held it out to him.

"Come, put it on!" she said.

He put it on, protesting. She drew the hood up over his head and looked at him; then she did the same with They would have passed her own. very well together for a pair of women. He set himself in front of her.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"Listen!" she said. "It is at night that our women take out the food to the trenches. If we have the cook tins with us, no one will notice, no one will make us to stop. I will take you to the trenches in the Dal-spruit; from there you will be safe."

"And then?" he inquired.

She looked him in the eyes, but said nothing.

"There you'll leave me?"

She nodded, and he shook his head. "No," he said, "that isn't how I see it. There are only two ways for me from here to camp—with you or without you. You can choose."

"You have no right-" she began hotly.

"My dear," he bore in gravely, "I'm not urging one. But any prisoner may decline a safe-conduct. There are things a man can accept only from the woman who loves him; I consider that one of them is the risking of her

"I am not risking it," she protested

stubbornly

"Claire," he said quietly, "there is, and you know it, only one thing that matters. Say you love me, and you may do with me what you will. If you can't say that-I'm my own mas-

She looked steadfastly at him, as if to estimate the full power of his will. Then, suddenly, she covered her face with her hands, and sank into a chair.

He was at once upon his knees beher. "Dearest," he pleaded. "Don't rob us of the only reason that rights a little the wrong we've done! If we haven't love to plead for it, what poor, lost things we are!"

She took down her hands from her face, to show it touched with a cloudy radiance, like sunlight slanting from gray heavens upon fields far away. "Love," she whispered.

"It doesn't atone, it doesn't exonerate," he urged gently; "but, because it's the biggest thing in the world, it's the thing a man may feel least ashamed to be beaten by. And if you and I have forgotten our countries, it's because for love there are no countries but this world and the next."

She looked down, with her grave beauty glowing into his urgent face.

"Love!" she whispered.

But this time there was a claim in it, a confession. With an arm about her shoulders, he drew down her lips to him. She let them lie lifeless upon his; then, with a sudden sob that shook all her being, she kissed him fiercely

and tore her face away.

In the delight of that avowal, he would have dallied there, but she was far more practical. That one kiss was the pledge of her soul; it had to be; but any others would have seemed in-

temperate.

She stood up, to be out of his reach, and then, as he sprang to his feet, she held him out of it, with her strong hands on his shoulders. But the smile that shone over the storm of her face, warm and glad as its first gleam to the spring sun of a world shriveled by winter, set his pulses beating with the larger issues in this yielding of herself.

He took obediently from her the food tins she held out to him, and smiled submissively as she drew again over it the hood that had fallen from his head.

They were challenged casually three times on their way to the trenches, and always her clear, round voice replied, without a tremor, as though it were, indeed, only an old aunt who walked beside her, instead of the man she loved on a track that trembled between

life and death.

At the first trench, she gave the countersign to a sentry, who seemed irritated at their interruption on his rendezvous with sleep; then, instead of going straight on to the advanced trench, as her direction appeared to indicate, she turned abruptly to the right, as soon as they were out of sight and hearing; and, depositing their tins, led the way down to the bottom of the spruit. For half a mile they picked their way, single file, in absolute silence, amid the mimosa thorn and the worn boulders, toward the British lines. Then, when the spruit turned away from their course abruptly at right angles, she halted.

The broad, low remnant of the river gurgled oilily over the smooth, rocky bed before them, its dark, crystalline eddies shot with golden needles of starlight, like some wondrous spar. She had found the great stepping-stones by which alone it could be crossed, but

hesitated, as if reluctant to face the black swirl of the water.

Condover, who was behind her, tried to push past, but she blocked the space quietly with an outstretched arm. Then he understood. She was crossing Jordan, away from her chosen people and

the promised land.

She led the way at last through the darkness over that treacherous causeway, with the black water boiling over their feet as the unsteady stones rocked into it, without a quiver or an unsure step. But on the farther side she turned to him, all the strength gone out of her in that last struggle with an allegiance which still called, claimed her.

It was too dark for him to read the appeal in her face, but they had thrown off their cloaks to cross the river, and Condover saw her figure suddenly waver, as though forsaken of its lithe force, and caught her in his arms as

she stumbled toward him.

For more than a moment she lay there in silence, breathing hard, her

senses reeling.

Then, in a difficult whisper, she said, against his ear, as if to excuse her weakness: "I have lost everything that

I have loved-but you."

He pressed his lips hard against her cheek, in silence, unable to speak, for his strained hearing had caught the click of a closed breech, and he knew too well the ways of Thomas Atkins on night picket to expect any challenge before the rifle spoke. "Don't fire!" he said, very clear and low. "I can give you the countersign. Cairo!"

There was an uncomfortable pause, during which Condover wondered where the bullet would drill him, before a husky "Pass, friend!" came in

response

Yet for a moment he did not pass, but stood there, despite the risk of it, between the two armies, till he had lifted Claire's lips to his and given her a kiss of welcome to his own people. He dared not even whisper, but she understood. Then he put an arm about her, and they went forward to the picket.





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CENE, the card room of a club in Baltimore. Enter a young gentleman who bears the unmistakable signs of having dined well. In Baltimore one can dine extremely well. He

cuts in at a first-rate table of bridge and secures for a partner the sedatest and solemnest old gentleman imaginaable.

Old gentleman leads a low club; dummy has three clubs to the ten; young gent who has dined holds only the ace and knave. He hesitates, and then plays the knave, which is captured by the queen in the dealer's hand. The sedate old gentleman, it may be added, parenthetically, has led from five clubs to the king, ten, nine.

After the hand and before the inevitable brickbats, bouquets, congratulations, and recriminations had been passed around the table, the young diner-out addressed his elderly partner of the old school:

"Think I was right t' fin'sse jack o' hearts?"

"Well," said the old gentleman, with almost the suspicion of a chuckle, "it all depends. I generally play the ace before dinner. After dinner I sometimes play the knave."

This tale reminds me of a hundred and one delicate little "squelchers" that I have heard administered at the bridge table. The great art of the thing is, of course, to be perfectly good-natured and suave and yet, at the same time, to lay the beggars out absolutely flat.

Probably the greatest single masterpiece of this sort was that consummated by the late James Clay, M. P., who, in his day, was, even more than Lord Henry Bentinck, the king of the English whist-playing world. He was a person of few words. His manner was extremely deliberate. He was, with it all, a man of rare culture and classical learning. He liked a few men very much. He detested a few quite as cordially. All the others were in what he called his "gray, or neutral class."

The great authority was looking on at a rubber in a London club when the third player-whom he favored notholding ace, king, and knave, instead of playing the king, as he should have done, finessed the knave. The queen took the trick, and the ace and king were subsequently ruffed by the dealer, who had held the queen single. The player then turned to Mr. Clay and asked him if he thought the play of the knave had been the correct one. To him, the following crusher was administered very deliberately. It was, however, spoken at the opposite wall, and not at all at the querist:

"At the game of whist, as played in England"—pause—"you are not called upon to win a trick"—another and a longer pause—"unless you please to do so."

Another very pretty instance of the brass knuckle in the velvet glove was once perpetrated by "Cavendish," the late Henry Jones.

On one occasion he set down what he always called an "if-you-had" partner, in the following delicate yet effectual manner. He used to say that next to

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the "if-you-had" partner, the "it-didn'treally-matter" partner was the most tiresome and provoking.

Well, in this particular rubber of bridge, Cavendish led a small heart in a no trumper, from ace, ten, and two small ones. The queen and two small hearts were in dummy. The dealervery stupidly-risked the queen, and C's partner won with the king, and returned the nine which, not being covered by the dealer, held the trick. C's partner, having no more hearts, now switched to his own suit-clubs-in which C won the first trick. He was then in some perplexity as to whether or not he ought to make his ace of hearts before returning his partner's club suit. He hated to part with his tenace over the knave guarded on his right, but, on the other hand, he had no other sure reentry with which to get in and make his ace later on in the game. It was a question of judgment, depending on the score and on the exact values of the cards already counted in the dummy and presumably reposing in the dealer's hand.

He finally decided to hold on to his precious tenace, thinking that the dealer would sooner or later be forced to lead the hearts up to him. It turned out unluckily, however, and the dealer was later able to discard both of his hearts on some small spades in the dummy. At the end of the hand Cavendish was saluted with the usual:

"Oh, partner! If you had only led out your ace of hearts! Why didn't you do it?" etc., etc.

Cavendish was all eagerness and

"You see," continued his partner, "you would have saved the game. Why didn't you do it?"

"Well," was the answer, "you are probably right. I frequently make such silly blunders. I certainly would have played my ace, but I stupidly forgot that it was the best heart."

Cavendish used to say that, after this incident, this particular "if you hadder" never "if you hadded" him

How stupid can a bridge partner be?

Here is an interesting question, and one that I am investigating very carefully, Can he possibly be stupider than my friend, Mr. D.? Here is the trifling incident on which I base my claim that Mr. D. is in a little class of degradation all by himself. He cut in, the other day, at the Newport Golf Club. Before he even dealt the cards his partner delivered himself of the following elo-

quent address:

"Now, Ned, listen to me! We are playing for high stakes. You are my partner and my friend! If you love me, if you hold anything sacred, if you are better than an ape, you will always get out the trumps, provided you and dummy have seven trumps between you. Ah! You nod your head! Splendid! You were listening-you even understood what I said! Give me your hand, old comrade. What will you drink with me? The best is not good enough for you."

Ned proceeded very deliberately to deal the cards. Ned is an extremely "thumby" dealer. He looked at his cards and declared diamonds on six diamonds to the ace, queen. Dummy went down with four diamonds to the king, ten, and five spades with the four top honors. The leader opened the nine of spades, of which suit Ned held three low cards. The game was in sight; six diamonds and five spades or five by cards. But Ned, after playing the jack of spades in dummy, apparently had a brilliant idea. Holding the king of hearts and another small heart, he led a low heart from the dummy and popped up his king from his own hand. The leader was right there with the ace and queen. At the fourth trick, third hand was equally ready with the ace of clubs, and the leader was then permitted to ruff a spade. Result: Ned wins three by cards, instead of five.

Ned's partner, a great sadness welling from him: "Oh, Neddy! How could you? Why, in the name of goodness and mercy, didn't you get out the

trumps?"

Ned, good-natured up to this point, but flaring up here as if a supreme indignity had been heaped upon him: "Trumps? Why, man, dear, what are you talking about? I was crazy to lead trumps, but you knew so much you told me not to. You said 'lead 'em if we have seven between us!' Well, it so happens that we didn't have seven between us. We had tcn. I'm not going to lead 'em when you ask me not to. If you mean 'ten,' you ought to say 'ten.' I'm not a mind reader!"

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At this point Ned's partner merely passed a handkerchief rapidly over his aching brow and began making the cards, while a solemn silence reigned.

A little earlier in this article I mentioned the name of Henry Jones, probably-with the exception of Deschappeles, a Frenchman—the greatest whist and bridge player that ever lived. I have often wondered how Jones would fare in these days of bridge. What would be, I have asked myself, his probable winnings at five-cent points? Curiously enough, I have just had light on the subject. Among his papers, after his death, there was found his actual tally of rubbers and results. The figures, I am bound to admit, are surprising, not to say incredible. I expected that Cavendish probably won, in every fifty rubbers, about thirty, or sixty per His figures are accurate, for no less than 30,668 rubbers of straight whist. Giving him my sixty per cent. of winnings he would have won 18,-401 rubbers, and lost 12,267 rubbers. What was my surprise to find that the actual figures were only 15,-648 won and 15,020 lost, or a shade over fifty-two per cent, won. I can only say that Cavendish must have been an extremely unlucky player, and that he must, besides, have chosen to play only with the best players. Otherwise his winnings should have been far greater than they were.

For purposes of argument, let us assume that a rubber of bridge takes twice as long to play as a rubber of straight—short—whist. Had Cavendish then played bridge instead of whist, and had his luck been the same, he would have won only 314 rubbers, or 17.5 rubbers a year, net. Assuming

that the average rubber, at five-cent bridge, is eight dollars, then Cavendish—the greatest whist player that the Anglo-Saxon world has ever known—would not have made over one hundred and forty dollars a year, at five-cent points, or barely enough to pay his card money at an average New York club. One hundred and forty dollars! Just think of it! I know card "butchers" who make twice that amount in a year.

It was not only at whist and bridge Cavendish was a remarkable genius, but at every other game of cards. Hardly an English card game escaped improvement at his hands. If I wished to show what a splendid mind his was in the analysis and study of cards, I should certainly be tempted to quote his famous essay, "Molière on Piquet." In the year 1661, Molière published his celebrated play, "Les Fâcheux." This comedy contains a somewhat remarkable piquet hand, in which Alcippe is worsted by his adversary, St. Bouvain. Now, the hand is only outlined roughly by Alcippe. Added to this, piquet, in those days, was a game of thirty-six cards instead of, as at present, thirty-two, but, notwithstanding this, Jones has written a charming little essay on the hand in which he (1) shows us the differences between the old game and the new, (2) corrects Molière's faulty description of the hand as it must have been played, (3) points out Alcippe's stupid blunders, and (4) commends St. Bouvain's play of the entire hand. The whole essay is a masterly analysis of old piquet.

But this is an article on modern bridge, and not a dissertation on old whist or older piquet.

I should like to show my readers the first two tricks of a hand that was recently played in England. The score is 12 all. Rubber game. Z deals and leaves it to dummy (Y) who declares no trumps. A, the leader, leads the three of hearts. Dummy's hand consists of: Hearts, ace, 7, 4. Diamonds, ace, 9, 3. Clubs, king, queen, 9, 5, 3. Spades, ace, 6.

B's hand (the third player) was as

follows: Hearts, knave, 2. Diamonds, king, knave, 8, 5, 4. Clubs, ace, 10, 6,

2. Spades, king, 2.

The first trick was: 3 hearts, 4, knave, queen. The second trick was:

4 clubs, knave, queen, ace.

I should like to ask my readers what B (the third player) ought to lead at this juncture? Think it over carefully! The answer, and, I dare say, that many of my readers could have easily puzzled it out, is: B should lead the

king of diamonds.

This answer to the problem results entirely from A's having opened the hand with the three of hearts. The three must be A's fourth best heart, as B himself holds the two. In other words, A must have led from his longest and strongest suit-as he is a careful and accurate player-which is four hearts. Now, as soon as A plays the knave of clubs at trick two, B can be positively sure that A has no more clubs. A, then, must have held, originally, four hearts, one club, and eight other cards, which must be four spades and four diamonds as, having five of either of these suits A would have led that suit rather than his suit of only four hearts. Now, if A has four diamonds, then Z, the dealer, can have only one, as B has five and the dummy has three. B can now count the dealer's hand with absolute certainty. He must hold one diamond, three hearts, two clubs, and five spades.

Now, we have seen that the dealer can have only one diamond, but there is just the off chance that that diamond may be the queen. In case it is the queen, B must lead out his king and drop the queen. The play of the king can do no harm, and it may prevent the loss of the game, for, if the dealer holds the queen single and B leads a low diamond, Y-Z must infallibly score game-two tricks-while, if B leads the king, A-B must infallibly save the

Here are two problem hands that I hope will puzzle my readers. The solutions to them will be found at the end of this article. The first of the hands was sent me by Mr. G. H. Warde, who has a good deal of skill in these matters, while the second is by no less a card authority than Mr. Ernest Berg-

Problem Number One: Hearts are trumps. The dealer is to lead and take nine out of the ten tricks, against any possible defense. The hands are all exposed.

A (Dealer): Hearts, 8, 4. Diamonds, queen, 6. Clubs, 10, 9, 3, 2. Spades,

Y (Left of Dealer): Hearts, 10, 9. Diamonds, king, jack, 10, 5, 2. Clubs, 7. Spades, 10, 4.

B (Dummy): Hearts, ace, king, queen, jack, 6. Diamonds, ace, 9, 8, Hearts, ace, king,

7. Clubs, jack. Z (Right of Dealer): •Hearts, 7, 5, 3, 2. Diamonds, 4, 3. Clubs, 8, 6, 5.

Spades, jack.

Problem Number Two involves only seven cards in each hand. Clubs are trumps. Y is to lead and, with his partner, Z, is to take five out of the seven tricks. There is no known way in which Y-Z can make six of the seven tricks, and in only one way can they make the required five. All the hands are exposed.

Y (Leader): Hearts, 9, 5. Clubs, Diamonds, king, queen. Spades,

B (Left of Leader): Clubs, queen, jack. Diamonds, ace, 10, 8, 7, 4. Z. (Dummy): Clubs, ace, 10. Dia-

monds, jack, 9, 3, 2. Spades, 5. A (Right of Leader): Hearts, queen,

Clubs, 7, 6. Diamonds, 6, 5. Spades,

My readers may-the ladies, I mean -be subscribers to a well-known periodical devoted to the interests of American women. If so, they will have read with glee in the last issue the somewhat severe arraignment of their sex, in the article entitled, "Women and Cards.'

This article was the result of hundreds of letters which were sent by the editor to various clergymen, presidents of women's clubs, prominent suffragettes, and a few idle women of fashion, inquiring as to the ravages, evils, and tragedies due to bridge playing in their particular sections of the country. The net result, after all was said and sifted, is that those ladies and clergymen who do not play bridge think it a great waste of effort, while those that do play it are inclined to think that it is, on the whole, an excellent way of passing the time.

Without wishing to belittle the editor's efforts, I should like to make one or two mild protests and comments before the agitation has blown over and

been forgotten.

One lady, we learn, has left religious work and has ended by going insane over bridge! How many women are there who have gone crazy over reli-

gion?

A certain president of a club, "composed of fashionable women," said that she felt very strongly on the subject. She went on to say that she knew "a sanitarium outside of Washington which is filled wth patients in a state of nervous collapse" due to bridge playing. If the lady will give me the address of the sanitarium I shall undertake to cure every female patient in the institution within a week's time. I shall give them all four aces to go to bed with!

A lady whose name is not given, but as to whose social standing we are made to feel perfectly at ease, has some very cruel things to say about bridge. Her remarks are interesting, but out of place. They should have been contributed to a Sunday supplement. Just because she ends up with a delicious bit of unconscious humor, however, I am going to quote a part of her fulmination, knowing, full well, that AINSLEE's readers will believe only so much of it as has been plentifully sprinkled with the very best salt.

"Let it once be known that you have abjured bridge, and you will have no one to call on, none to call on you; no one to bid or be bidden by."

"Does the bridge-playing woman realize how, in her husband's heart, wonder, amaze, disappointment, and contempt are coming slowly to their unhappy evolution? I wish I dared to

tell some of the women I know what I, and others, are beginning to read in

their husbands' faces."

"One woman told, in my hearing, of winning enough to buy an automobile, and a young girl confessed that she bought her winter suit and her superb furs from the profits of the card table"

"I have seen women who could ill afford it offering prizes of exquisite French hand-embroidered underwear, and women, with plenty of hosiery, so intent upon winning a few extra pairs of silk stockings that neither storm nor sickness could keep them from the bridge table."

Solution to Problem Number One, mentioned in the body of the foregoing

article.

The dealer must lead the 2 clubs over to the jack in dummy. Dummy must then play one of his high hearts, let us say, the jack. Then (trick 3) dummy must play his 6 hearts and put Y in the lead with the 10 hearts. After this, Y-Z's goose is cooked. Play as they will, A and B can make every other trick. What can Y lead safely? Nothing.

Solution to Problem Number Two, mentioned in the body of the foregoing article. The underlined card wins the trick.

Trick I—King diamonds, ace, 2, 5. (If B refuses to take the trick, Y has only to go on with the queen of diamonds, and Y-Z have, if anything, an easier job than they had before.)

Trick 2—Queen clubs, ace, 6, 8. (Z must be sure to play the ace here, or it will go hard with him, later on.)
Trick 3—10 clubs, 7; queen diamonds, jack clubs.

(This discard of the queen diamonds is the key to the whole riddle.)

Trick 4—4 diamonds, 9, 6, 5, hearts, Trick 5—Jack diamonds——?

(If A discards the ace of spades here, Y discards the 9 hearts, and makes a trick with the 6 spades. If A discards queen hearts, Y discards 6 spades, and wins with 9 hearts.)





HEN T. Huntington Forbes, whose engagement to Mildred Vandeberg had been broken less than a month, reached his bachelor quarters, at one a. m., in so good a condition as to be able

to mount the steps before his faithful man Simonds could reach his side, he improved the occasion to beam upon himself and invite a bit of favorable comment.

"Got up all 'lone. Pretty fair, eh, Si?"

Simonds coughed, to conceal a spasmodic grunt of disgust. He found it impossible to get accustomed to this abbreviation of his name. It was the one flaw in as perfect a position as a gentleman valet could desire. From no one else would he have submitted to such an indignity.

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir."

"'Lone and unaided I reached the portals. Not every fellow can do that."

"A great many can't, sir."

"Don' know's you could do it yourself. Pretty steep steps, and lots of 'em—deuce of a lot of 'em when you come to look back from here. See if you can do it."

"Pardon me, sir," suggested Simonds, holding open the door temptingly, and reaching for Forbes' hat. But the latter had leaned against the door frame, in the stubborn fashion which Simonds had learned to recognize as more easily handled by submission than persuasion, so he dutifully

descended to the street and soberly mounted the steps, though his rheumatism made this no pleasant task,

"You did it! By George, you did it, ol' man. Didn't think it was in you. Betcher can't do it again—betcher can't do it twice!"

"But, sir—"

"Betcher can't do it twice! Come, now, ol' sport, if you can do it twice, I lose, and go in 'thout 'nother word."

Once again Simonds plodded down the steps and back again. Forbes applauded vigorously and, true to his word, allowed himself to be conducted in. Simonds instantly removed his hat and coat as a precautionary measure before making the announcement he had twice tried in vain to make:

"Beg pardon, sir, but there's a lady

in the library."

Forbes, in the act of reaching for a cigarette, stood poised like a snapshot of a bird in flight. He stared at Simonds as though the latter had just made his appearance up through the floor. Then he slowly brought his hand out of his pocket and placed it upon Simonds' shoulder.

"Si," he declared sorrowfully, "I'm 'fraid you've been drinkin'. It'll steal away your brains, ol' man; it'll—"

But in the middle of his exhortation he realized that he was confronting a cold fact. He steadied himself against the wall and tried to think, but what was the use of trying to think out any reason for such a supernatural visitor as this? By far the wiser plan was to fold his tent like an Arab and silently steal away. He moved along the wall

toward his hat, with his finger upon his lips, but Simonds stopped him.
"If you go, sir," he submitted, "what

am I going to do with her?"
"I don' know. Call the police—call the firemen. She isn't a long-lost rel'-tive—anything of that sort?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"Then t'ain't proper, Si," he affirmed, moving toward the door. "That's all there is about it-it isn't proper."

"I think if you was to see her, sir,

"What does she look like?"

"She's a little lady, sir." "Dark?" he asked suspiciously. "Little ladies are generally dark."

"I couldn't see her hair, sir." That settled it. She was trying to conceal her identity. She would make a scene of some sort, like the mysterious females upon the stage. His conscience was clear enough, but one could never tell about these women in veils. They appeared everywhere and at all times.

He had his hand upon the knob, when he heard a cry that sobered him like a cold plunge. It was a low animal-

like cry, and yet human. "They said that if she woke up," explained Simonds, "that you was to feed her, sir. There was instructions came with her."

Forbes seized Simonds by the shoul-

"What the deuce is it?" he gasped. "A lady baby, sir, that was left early

in the evening, with a note."
"A—a baby? A live baby?"
"I judge so, sir, by the noise. It

hasn't spoken before.

"But, good Lord, Simonds, I don't know any babies. Isn't a baby in my acquaintance. It must belong next door."

"At the Misses Weatherby's, sir?" "No, that doesn't seem possible.

But why here—why here, Simonds?"
"I don't know, sir. There's the "I don't know, sir. note."

"Where?"

"Pinned on its clothes. I didn't trouble it."

"Go get it."

"Yes, sir, if you will come with me, sir."

Simonds himself was not a family man, and shared something of his master's timidity in dealing with so foreign a matter. Moreover, he half suspected that, if left alone, Forbes would bolt. But now, thoroughly humbled and most decidedly sober, the young man followed, without protest.

No one knew the cause of the trouble between Mildred Vandeberg and Forbes. The match had been considered quite ideal and as inevitable as the union of two peaceful neighboring kingdoms. Forbes was rich, good-looking, and popular; Miss Vandeberg was rich, beautiful, popular, and talented. She was also, as distinguished from the rest of her set, independent and original. To her intimates, she insisted that there had been no quarrel.

"Hunt is a bully good fellow," she declared enigmatically, "but—well, he's a bully good fellow, that's all.'

Since the match had been declared off, the two had met just as they had before their engagement, for she had insisted to her friends and to him that there should be no scenes.

"If you really love me," she had said, holding his hand firmly that night she had sent him away in something of a daze, "you'll behave yourself, Hunt, and you'll not make things awkward by posing as a martyr.'

He had done his best and, to tell the truth, this had been good enough almost to win her back again. As he now followed Simonds into the unlighted room-both moving on tiptoe as at the approach to some mystic shrine—he thought of her. He had the uncanny feeling that she was now watching him. It was a bit embarrass-

Simonds turned on the lights. Instantly, as by some prestidigitateur's trick, a basket, containing a blinking infant, appeared upon the library table. It was the first time in the history of this old house, which his father had built, that such a miracle had been performed since he himself had been ushered into the world. There it lay, in the midst of magazines, tobacco boxes, a tray of pipes, a deck of cards, and a box of poker chips. Instinctively, he ventured near enough to remove the cards and chips and toss them into the waste-paper basket. Then he stood at arm's length of it, and studied it.

Not much could be seen but a nest of white clothes and a very small, red face. Its eyes, when closed, made two tiny slits, which gave it the appearance of a Japanese doll. It was a queerlooking thing, yet he felt the same impulsive tenderness toward it one does toward a downy puppy dog. Attached to the blanket was a bit of paper.
"Simonds," he demanded, his lips grown dry, "hand me that note."

Simonds uneasily edged near enough to reach it, and Forbes took it between his thumb and forefinger. It was unheaded and was written in a hand he did not recognize. It read as fol-

They told me to-day that I BIG MAN: must die and leave my baby all alone in the world. You don't know me, but I have seen your picture in the paper, and something bids me send her to you. You are strong-you me send her to you. You are strong-you have wealth-you are living all to yourself. Here is a little soul without anything but her soul, but that is honest and pure. your strong arms about her, Big Man, and so a great blessing shall come to you.

The letter was unsigned. Appended were minute instructions for the care of the child.

When he had finished, there was an ache in his throat, and the lights grew shimmering. He detested sentimental-ity, so he scowled at Simonds as though the latter were responsible for the whole affair.

"Read that," he commanded.

Simonds read it. When he had finished, he in his turn scowled at the lights, as though they were responsible for the whole affair. He handed back the note, without a word. There was a feeble wail from the basket. Forbes glanced at the instructions. They read:

When she wakes, give her the bottle.

The bottle lay at her feet. "Simonds," ordered Forbes, "the bottle."

"I beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed Simonds, turning red, "but I've had no

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experience in such matters, sir."
"Then," Forbes continued blandly, "it is time you had. Stick the rubber thing in its mouth and see what happens.

Simonds obeyed. The milk began to disappear. It was really wonderfully

## II.

In the sober light of broad day, Forbes read the letter again. It was very direct in its appeal—like a single plunge of a Damascus blade for the heart. He tried to tell himself that this was an unwarranted imposition; that the responsibility was none of his; that there was no reason why he, more than another, should be so burdened; that the situation might even appear to his friends as compromising; that he was not fit to accept such a charge; but the answer to all these and a dozen other obvious objections lay in that simple incisive phrase:

You are a strong man living alone-put your arms about her.

It was the challenge of weakness to strength. It swept away all the excuses to which he was entitled as a citizen and put the responsibility directly to him as a man. Somehow it seemed instantly to isolate him with this tiny, dependent body. To argue seemed as cowardly a thing as to debate in an emergency the question of risking one's own life to save another. There were several things which the law and human convention allowed him to do: he could turn the infant over to the police; he could himself place it in some foundling asylum; he could find a home for it with some poor widow woman-strange that there is always a home for children with poor widow women and at the expense of a few dollars dismiss it altogether from his mind. But this seemed like weak compromise. It looked like a crawling, and he was too good a sportsman to do that. And how much of his arms would there be in these other courses? Why

had she used that phrase? It all came of having joined the polo club, and so gotten his picture in the papers. He determined to send in his resignation to-morrow.

He had risen two hours earlier than usual, and now, after bolting the breakfast, which he was in the habit of taking in a most leisurely fashion, he was about to light a cigarette when he was interrupted by a wail from the next room. He summoned Simonds in haste.

"The directions," he ordered.

Simonds brought them, holding them as gingerly as though they were a fragile part of the infant itself. They read:

The baby will wake at about eight-thirty.

He glanced at his watch.

"She's on time," he informed Simonds.

"Yes, sir," answered Simonds, studying his own watch, "almost to the minute, sir,"

He read on:

Her morning bath should be tepid and-

He stopped short, and glanced at Simonds. The latter had stooped to poke the fire, which was burning briskly.

"Simonds."
"Yes, sir."

"Did you catch that?"

"Yes, sir; I will draw the water at

once."
"You will not," said Forbes sternly.
"This will never do. I have strong prejudices against undertaking so intimate a detail of a young lady's toilet.
And as for you——"

"Good Lord, sir," interrupted Simonds. "I wouldn't for the world, sir."

"No gentleman could," affirmed Forbes. "It is in decidedly bad taste."

But the wails from the next room announced that something must be done, and that shortly.

"We must send for some one at once," Forbes announced, "We must ring up for some one."

"Yes, sir," Simonds assented eagerly.

"But who? Who does one get to give young ladies baths?"

"There's the laundry woman."

Forbes checked him with a glance. "It doesn't say anything about its being starched and done up," he objected. "You're inhuman, Simonds. I believe you'd have it put through a wringer, and ironed."

"No, sir," Simonds disclaimed hastily. "I wouldn't harm a hair of her

head, sir."

"That would be impossible," returned Forbes. "She hasn't any."

"I thought I saw a little, sir, around the edges."

"That is only fuzz. But, Simonds, we don't need a laundress or a steam-cleaning establishment or a vacuum. Just, as I take it, a plain-spoken woman who understands how to douse an infant and get it dry again. Now where can—"

"If you were to ring up some of the married gentlemen at the club, sir—"

Forbes started from his chair.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"It was just a suggestion, sir."
Forbes ran his handkerchief over his forehead.

"Don't," he panted, "don't make any more such suggestions."

"There's the doctor, sir. He might

know."
"Simonds," declared Forbes, rising to

his feet, "if you scare me again, I'll make you do it yourself."

Simonds remained dumb, but that was more than the baby did. It demanded immediate action of some sort. It was clear that the infant mind was literal; eight-thirty meant eight-thirty, and not a minute later. Forbes endured it for a moment, and then flatly capitulated.

"Haven't you something to offer?" he demanded. "Haven't you ever observed what women do in a crisis of this sort?"

"They takes them up, sir."

"Then take it up!"
"You have to know how," objected Simonds. "Lord, sir, if you was to drop it, or jam it——"

"Horrible!" interrupted Forbes, with

a wave of his hand to check the fearful

"However, sir, we might try the bot-

tle again," hazarded Simonds.

"You will have to do it at your own risk," returned Forbes blandly. "The direction read: 'After the bath.' "Perhaps it could skip one,"

"At your own risk, and if it shrivels up, or anything, don't blame me."

The two were as helpless as before a strange machine which was running wild. To touch this lever or that; to tamper with this valve or the other might result in the whole thing blowing up. Simonds, however, being hard pressed by Forbes' recent threat, re-solved to try the bottle. It worked like magic, the shrill wails twittering off into a happy gurgle. Flushed with victory, he looked to Forbes for appro-

bation. The latter nodded.
"But," he warned, "this is but a bridge. temporary Nothing, added, with fine indifference to the motley group of similes, "but an oasis—just an armistice—a makeshift—a breathing space between rounds-a rest between the halves. The bath is still

ahead."

'There are the employment agencies," murmured Simonds timidly.

"Good!" exclaimed Forbes, slapping "Now you have it! his knee. were stupid not to have thought of them before."

In his relief, he took heart to light a cigarette. Then, crossing his knee, he squinted meditatively through the smoke, as though the whole business were now settled.

"Tell them," he advised, "that a respectable bachelor with a baby-"

"Perhaps I had better say adopted

baby, sir.

"By all means," agreed Forbes. "Or, rather, put it, for the sake of accuracy, that a bachelor, adopted by a respectable baby, desires a lady valet to give it a bath. She must know how to keep it from crying, and give it such other attentions as a young lady has a right to expect. To one able to render this service, alone and unassisted, any salary demanded will be paid. Recommendations will be furnished. You will recommend me as an employ-

er, Simonds?"

"Recommend you, sir?"

"I understand it is necessary to-day, in order to secure a good servant, Now, about milk-is there any milk in the house?"

"No, sir. We don't use much milk,

sir."
"Then perhaps you had better tell the nurse to bring milk with her, and per-haps we had better leave an order with the milkman. The Misses Weatherby will furnish you with his name. They use milk; I've seen bottles there. Get a gallon or two, and have it fresh."

"Yes, sir,"

"As for other things," said Forbes, rising, "get anything the nurse asks for—promise anything you can't get. If it seems necessary to brush that fuzz, she may take my military brushes
—the old pair—until I am able to get her a toilet set. I think you had better get her a toothbrush of her own at once. Now, I am going downtown to think. I will phone you later."

Whereupon, Forbes took his hat and went out, leaving Simonds to do the best he could. He had great confidence

in Simonds.

## III.

Some people received a surprise in the way Forbes, in the face of everything, clung to this unknown waif. He turned his bachelor quarters into as sober an establishment as that of a middle-aged widower. He imported a housekeeper, as well as a nurse, and, with Simonds, retreated to the top floor. He got in early and sober, and spent Sunday afternoons at home. He endured good-naturedly the chaff at the clubs, amused himself with the arched eyebrows of the matrons, and smiled airily at the frank amazement of the younger set. Soon he began to refuse invitations, but this was attributed partly to the fact that Miss Vandeberg had sailed for Europe.

It was on the fourth week of the advent of the child that Mrs. Merriweather, the housekeeper, took occasion to ask, as the baby lay sprawled out on a rug before the fire:

"Have you decided on a name for

it, yet, sir?"

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Up to now Forbes had always referred to the child as "It"; Simonds, with more imagination, as "Rosy Posy, the nurse as "Dearie," and Mrs. Merriweather as "poor 'ittle orphan child." These appellations had seemed adequate It answered impartially to any enough. of them.

But Mrs. Merriweather, being an oldfashioned sort, had thought it almost heathenish to allow the child to go so long unchristened. She had spoken of

this before.

"A name?" inquired Forbes uneasily, "It's too deuced small to have a name,

isn't it?'

'She's getting to be quite a young lady, now. See, the sweet thing is looking at you! She understands this minute what we are talking about, just as well as you do."

This was a favorite illusion of Mrs. Merriweather's. At first, it had startled Forbes, and he had been careful what he said in the child's presence, but of late he had begun to doubt its

"If she has been listening," he suggested, "perhaps she might express a preference. I've looked through the end of the dictionary, and I'll be hanged There are so if I can decide on any. many of them. Try her on some easy ones.'

"Laws, sir, she can't talk."

"You translated some of those queer noises she was making a moment ago."

"She tries to talk, dear 'ittle orphan child, but you can't expect her to name

herself!

"I think it is a privilege which should be accorded children. Do you think I would have called myself Timothy, and used an initial all my life, if I had had half a show? I think it might have a temporary name, however, and I am open to suggestion as to what might be a good one. What do you say, Simonds?"

Simonds was on his knees in front of the delighted infant, causing a rabbit made from a handkerchief to hop from his hand in a very realistic fashion.

"I think 'Arriet is a pretty name, sir," he ventured.

As usual, after asking his advice, Forbes scorned it.

"I'm afraid 'Arriet is too English," he said.

"I have a sister named Mildred," hazarded Mrs. Merriweather.

But Forbes, feeling the sweat start upon his brow, disposed of that name as quickly as possible.
"There are reasons," he explained,

"why it might be inadvisable to name the child Mildred."

"It is a pretty name," contended the housekeeper, somewhat hurt.

"Oh, I agree with you, there! think it is a-a beautiful name. quite approve of the name as a name."

Mollified, Mrs. Merriweather forgot the incident, and suggested a dozen other names; but, as Forbes insisted,

none of them seemed to fit.

"Of course," he philosophized, "it's only a guess at best what sort of a name an infant is going to match, but you can tell, in a general way. For instance, you'd never call a child with blue eyes Arabella or Gwendolyn or Genevieve-that is, a good, healthy child."

The two advisors were very properly abashed, but this did not relieve Forbes in the slightest. He knew that he was cornered. If he did not choose a name at once, one of those others might get stuck to her for good. It was at this point that he thought of his sister, who had died young. She had been a beautiful girl, and his memory of her was very sweet to him. Her name was Alice.

Stooping, he swung the child into his She chuckled pleasantly, as she always did when Forbes handled her. Her blue eyes grew full of fun, and she grasped one of his fingers.

"Do you want to be called Alice?"

he asked.

It made strange noises.

"Hear the dear 'ittle orphan child!" exclaimed Mrs. Merriweather. "Doesn't she say 'Yes,' as plain as day?"

Forbes looked into the sky-blue eyes. "Well," he said soberly, "all right, then. You shall be named Alice."

He kissed her soft hair, and he thought how very like it was to another's hair, which he had never kissed.

That week, the child was legally adopted, and, following this, christened with all due formality.

## IV.

Three weeks later to a day, Simonds appeared in the new nursery, where Forbes lay, sprawled out on the floor, submitting to having his hair pulled, and made this announcement:

"A lady in the library, sir."

Forbes extricated himself so suddenly that he left the child aghast, its mouth wide open, its tiny fists poised for another clutch.

"There! There, sir!" scolded Simonds, stooping to comfort her.

"You've scared her, sir."

"Simonds," demanded Forbes, "did I understand you to say that there is a lady in the library?"

"Yes, sir."

Forbes took a long breath. Then he

answered firmly:

"Simonds, this is going too far. One is all right, but when it comes to a pair -well, this isn't any blooming orphan asylum, that's all. You can take it out, Simonds. I refuse to see it."

"But, sir-

"Not another word. Take it out, and leave it at the Weatherby door. It's their turn next. To-morrow I shall put up a sign. I shall-

"This is a big lady, sir," interrupted

Simonds, "a grown-up lady, sir."
"Did she send in her card?" he asked suspiciously. As like as not, Simonds was in league with her.

"No, sir; but I think as how I've seen her before."

"Who is she, then?" challenged Forbes.

"I just can't remember her name,

Forbes considered the situation a moment. There was a possibility that it was an aunt from a neighboring city who recently had written him her determination to call and see what he was about

"All right, Simonds," he finally announced. "I'll go down; but if it has anything to do with another one-by the Lord Harry, I'll make you take it and bring it up yourself."

'Yes, sir," answered Simonds, concealing something very like a smile in

the baby's hair.

Forbes had no sooner reached the library door than he was conscious of a vision sweeping toward him with the familiar exclamation which so often had gladdened his heart:

"Hello, Hunt."

No one could say it that way but Her; no one could so grasp his hand as instantly to flood his soul with sunshine, save Her; no one but Her could so beam out of blue eyes as to make a gray day seem as fair as hawthorn time in England. At this moment he felt all these things as he had never before.

"I couldn't have come here," she was saying, "if I hadn't heard that you had turned into a sober family man with a

housekeeper.'

She paused to study him curiously as she caught him blushing like a schoolgirl. Then she added in that low, clear voice which came to her when she was deeply moved:

"Hunt, it's bully of you! Just bully!" Then, as he looked up at her quickly, searchingly, she in her turn blushed and moved quickly across the room, where she seated herself.

"Tell me all about it," she demanded. "Tell me from the beginning."

He told her as well as he was able for the joy in his heart at the mere sight of her, but when he came to put it into words, he found that it appeared the thinnest kind of an incident.

"The little thing was left here in a basket one night, and there wasn't any one around, so Simonds and I took it. Then there didn't seem to be anything else to do but get a nurse. We couldn't have a nurse without a housekeeper, so we got a housekeeper. And there you "You are going to keep her?"

Forbes smiled. It seemed such an

absurd question.
"Yes," he answered, "I am going to "Yes," keep her."

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n a any c it. ning dn't , 50 you -- clubs and polo?" "I had gone stale on those, anyhow."

"And you don't miss them?" "Miss them with her? You don't know what good company she is." He added: "She has kept me from getting more lonesome than was good for me.

She raised her eyes swiftly to his at this, and then turned away. She looked very trim in her new Parisian costume. The sun caught her brown hair just above her shell of an ear. It was quite as soft and silken in that spot as Alice's hair.

"Hunt," she said, with something like a tremor in her voice, "Hunt, I didn't think it was in you. I didn't think your strong arms were good for much else but a polo ball."

He started at the phrase she used. It recalled that sentence in the letter.

"I'd like to be forgiven, Hunt," she continued, meeting his eyes frankly. There are not many women who can meet a man's eyes so. "I'd like to be forgiven for thinking so meanly of you.

"I don't get it," he answered, confused.

"Big man," she said, "I wasn't big enough myself to see how big you are."

She motioned him to stand where he was until she had finished. Then, with her eyes still on him, she ran on:

"I guess I have needed something of your strong arms, too. I had a beastly trip. I cried-for the first time in my life—because I was lonesome. I didn't know how much it was possible to miss any one."

"Don't say any more," he pleaded. "Just-just come here.

"No. I've got something else to tell you, first. I didn't think it was in you, Hunt; and yet-and yet something in me made me wish to be sure. I was afraid you were selfish. I thought you wanted me just as you'd want a new pony; and I couldn't come to you that It was just after I sent you off that I thought I saw my opportunity.'

She faltered a little, but went on resolutely.

"In my settlement work, I came across a pitiful case of a mother who had to die and leave her child. was an awful good sort, and the baby had too decent blood in her to be left to the mercies of an asylum. I made up my mind to take her, when-1 thought of you, Hunt. I thought it would be a sort of test. I told the mother what to write, and had the little girl sent to you. She died happy, Hunt."

She lowered her eyes, now. It seemed a long while before he spoke.

"And a great blessing shall come to you," he quoted solemnly. didn't think it would be as great as

"But, Big Man"-she trembled-"now you must test me-you must test

"All right," he answered cheerfully. "Close your eyes."

Simonds came noisily down the stairs, coughing apologetically as he came.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, as Forbes stepped into the hall, "but nurse wishes to know if she can now give Posy her nap. It's past time, sir."

Forbes turned to the girl who, drawn back out of sight, was nervously trying to put back into place a loosened lock of hair over a very pink ear. "May she?" he submitted.





## II.—THE MINE-FIELD PLANS



CK BANNISTER was lonely. Only lately had he acknowledged that fact to himself—only since the feeling had become so strong that by no effort of his will could he deceive

himself further. He could have had companionship enough had he been willing to accept it. Men of the sort he liked returned the liking instinctively. Nearly all women, good and bad, found themselves attracted by his grave, handsome face, and the powerful figure which yet was lithe and which always seemed as though it still should be wearing the uniform that had been discarded years before-years before, when there fell upon him the great disaster, utterly undeserved, but which, nevertheless, drove him from all he had known into the life which he now was leading.

It was owing to this mode of life that he refused all companionship of his peers. Dick lived by breaking nearly all the laws, except those against swindling and the like, which organized society has enacted for its protection. He had adopted this life deliberately, and so far as any ethical grounds were concerned he did not regret it. Through no fault of his own, society had cast him out, he argued. Why, then, so long as he injured none who were weak or helpless, should he not prey upon the men who, making the laws and

bending them at will to their own ends, systematically fleeced those who could not protect themselves? They took no risks; Dick pitted his brains and skill against them all—and won.

The injustice which had been visited upon him had so warped his nature that he saw no wrong in this—no fallacy in the argument which he presented. Instead, he gloried, in a grim sort of way, in his success, as men will take pride in that which they do well. Still, he realized perfectly that those with whom he would care to associate did not, as a rule, hold these views. Moreover, his friendship might bring danger and disgrace upon those to whom it was given. So he lived alone.

At the time when the blow had fallen upon Dick, there was but one being, a little girl, who had offered him sympathy. Afterward, he met this child again, then a woman, a young wife and mother, and happy in her lot as few in this imperfect world are. This happiness had been threatened. Dick caused the hand which wrote the threatening letter to turn against the brain which conceived it. He learned afresh to love this child-friend of his, and, for her sake, to love those who were dear to her. For this reason he left them, with a brief note of farewell, and ran away.

He bought a ticket to Baronton because, as his eye happened to catch the name on some placard in the railway station, it was the first one that occurred to him; his only intent was to get away to some place—any place—where there would be no danger of bringing trouble or disgrace upon that little family, whose members were the chief among the very few beings that he loved.

Baronton, though almost killed by the Civil War, had been an important seaport once, and now was beginning to revive under an influx of Northern capital. From the first, Dick was attracted to the old town; its air of faded gentility seemed restful, somehow, to that wanderer. It was an ideal spot for a man to be lonely in, or to fight his loneliness and the memories that came with it. There was a pair of ancient negro servants, man and woman, who seemed to go with the house, and here Dick moved his own family. consisted of one Tug Flynn, his devoted and decidedly disreputable personal man and Cupid, a bulldog, with the truculent appearance and excellent manners -toward those whom he had no reason to distrust-common to his race.

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It stood on high ground, this mansion, commanding a view of the surrounding country, and of the sea. A cupola surmounted it, and in this cupola most of Dick's fights with the loneliness and memories took place. Here he spent the greater part of his time, in company with Cupid and a pair of powerful field glasses, looking out over the old parade ground. For the war with Spain was about to begin, Baronton was garrisoned once more, and its ancient defenses were being modernized. Blue uniforms and a few of the early khaki could be seen; there were guard mount, drill, and parade, with the blare of bugles and rattle of drums. Every one of these sights and sounds brought with it to Dick an added pang of longing for what had been; yet he drank them in greedily.

One evening Dick was sitting, his binoculars at his eyes, watching a dress parade, when, hearing a noise behind him, he turned and saw Tug's head protruding through the trapdoor by which the cupola was reached. "Well—what is it?" he asked sharply, impatient at the interruption.

"Below," replied his servitor, with a backward jerk of his head. "A meek an' two dames—a black tub, wit' a peach fer fair, an' anodder peach what's dead ripe—an' then some."

"Can't you learn to speak English?" demanded Dick testily.

"Don't have ter. I c'n talk United States good enough, can't I?" asked Tug resentfully, in return,

Now, as a matter of fact, Tug could speak very fair English when he chose, but he rarely did choose when alone with Dick. To him, by some strange twist of his mind, this lapse into the vernacular of his sort seemed, in a measure, to preserve his independence. Gambler, thug, and all-around criminal as he was, bull-necked, and with the hard features of his type, Dick once had rescued him from grave peril at some risk to himself. Ever since, Tug had served him with a devoted and admiring loyalty, which not even Cupid could surpass. But he was bitterly ashamed of the fact, and this was his way of concealing it. As Dick, instead of answering him, turned wearily away, Tug repeated his question.

"I c'n talk United States good enough, can't I?" he asked.

"Possibly—but you didn't," replied Dick, "What do you mean by a 'meek' and a 'tub'?"

"A meek? Why, a collar—a devilpuncher—a crow," translated Tug. "A tub is a fat one."

"I see. Then I suppose you mean that there's a stout clergyman, a pretty girl, and a handsome, rather elderly woman waiting for me downstairs. Is that it?"

"De collar's fat, an' de goil's a beaut, all right," replied Tug slowly. "I guess de odder dame's in de aged class, but she's so upholstered an' frescoed I can't say, fer sure."

"A painted lady, eh? Odd company

"A painted lady, eh? Odd company for a clergyman—in public, anyhow," commented Dick, at last mildly interested. "What do they want?"

"Ter see youse. 'Most important,' dey said."

"Oh, all right. Tell 'em I'll be down," said Dick, with a sigh of resignation, and, as his henchman vanished, he lazily rose to follow. Though annoyed at being disturbed, he still had a very human curiosity as to what this trio, apparently so ill-assorted, could want with him. Dick's mode of life had not brought him much into con-

tact with the clergy.

There could be no doubt as to the accuracy of Tug's short but trenchant description so far as the "meek" was concerned. It was a very mountain of black-clad flesh which started to rise as he came in, only to fall back into the great chair that held him with a sigh of relief at Dick's gestured protest. In the face of this individual an expression of querulous annoyance struggled for supremacy with that of smug self-satisfaction. Dick had seen many of his kind before, and knew it perfectly. But accustomed as he was to making quick and accurate estimates of his fellow beings—indeed, both his safety and his livelihood depended largely upon this ability of his-he was puzzled as Tug had been over the older of the two women. Painted she undoubtedly was, and dressed in garments many years too young for her. though her appearance was grotesque, there was nothing really objectionable in it. It was eccentric, rather than vul-gar. Though Dick could not make her out, he spent but little time in trying, just then. It was the younger woman who claimed his attention.

She was tiny, most daintily formed, and very young—hardly more than twenty, Dick thought. Yet in her beautiful face, under its luxuriant crown of hair that had almost the metallic lustre of gold, was expressed the tragedy of the ages. She sat nearly facing the door through which he entered, but evidently saw neither him nor anything else. She looked over his head into vacancy with eyes which seemed even larger and darker than they really were on account of her deathly pallor, to which the white frock she wore offered

no contrast.

Dick took in all these things instantly, and was about to speak, when the clergyman forestalled him.

"You are Mr. Bannister, I think." said he, in an unctuous voice, which he might have used in the pulpit, and which seemed somehow to go naturally with the man. Dick bowed, and the other went on. "I am Samuel Bellinger. This lady is my cousin, Mrs. Jameson; that one, Miss Raymond. Doubtless you wonder what brought us here. You may rest assured that we would not have intruded had my cousin and Miss Raymond not thought it a matter of vital moment. A letter which Mrs. Jameson brings probably will explain our mission. Anything which you may wish to know further, we can perhaps tell you."

As his voice, in which he seemed to take great pleasure, ceased to boom through the drawing-room, the little painted lady extended a letter in one hand, while with the other she daubed at her eyes with the corner of a hand-kerchief, lest a tear should overflow and wreck havoc in its downward course. Dick took the letter, and with something like dismay saw that it was addressed to him in the hand of the grown-up child-friend from whom he had fled. Asking permission with a glance, he tore open the envelope and

read:

My Dearest Dick: It was cruel of you to go away from those who love you, and whom you say you love, without a word, as you did. The fact that you gave us all those lovely things you left behind doesn't make it any better. But, anyway, you did not succeed in concealing yourself, and the fact that you are now living in Baronton. I only learned yesterday that you were there. It seems that your cook is a cousin of my little colored maid, Alvina. You remember Alvina, don't you, Dick?

But all that isn't what I want to say. This will be given to you by a Mrs. Jameson. Don't laugh at her, please, dear, though I know she's funny. And don't think, just because she's funny, that she doesn't feel as deeply as any one can—for she does, and she's in deep trouble now. That's the reason I'm sending her to you. You must get her out of her trouble, Dick, dear, as you got me out of mine. It's the same sort of trouble,

too.

Here Dick stopped reading for a moment and took another look at Mrs. Jameson. He could not imagine her as afflicted by any such trouble as had beset his poor little friend. Hers came from a very early love affair. Surely, he thought, any similar affair in which Mrs. Jameson might have been engaged should have become innocuous by the mere course of time, many years before. Still, one never can tell. But he went on with the letter, and was enlightened.

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It lt ittle Of course it isn't her trouble. I ought to have said that in the first place. It's Freddy Pendavid's. He's her nephew, the son of a younger sister, who died at his birth. His aunt brought him up, and loves him, I really this trought have the proof profess love their think, more than most mothers love their And well she may-he's the dearest boy! We used to play together when we were little. You probably knew him then, too, but you will have forgotten.

He's in the army, and has been stationed there at Baronton. They've accused him of things—awful things. Of course he isn't guilty, but he can't prove it. And if he isn't cleared, it will break his aunt's heart-and not hers alone. Edith Raymond is just as dear for a girl as Freddy is for a boy. And that Millicent Brown—Mrs. Hall, as she is now—is a pig. More than that, she's as wished as a proposed of the state wicked as a woman can be. I went to school with both her and Edith, so I know. And that horrid Mr. Raines isn't, in my opinion, much better than Millicent. But he can't be much worse.

There's no use, though, in my going on like this, dear. I see, upon looking over what I've written, that I've said very little. nearly so much as you'll learn from a half dozen of questions. You mustn't mind what Mr. Bellinger says or does. He means well, but he's an awful goose-or should I say gander?-and doesn't count. But for my sake, if not for theirs—for I love them dearly
—don't fail, Dickie, dear.
The Kiddy—and all of us—send heaps of
love. Ever your devoted
Nita.

Dick read the last two paragraphs over again, very carefully, before he laid the letter down. He did not entirely agree with Nita when she stated that she had "said very little." What she had said was none too clear, it is true, but then, Dick was accustomed to her way of expressing herself, and, anyway, had intuitions almost like a woman's. Therefore, he had pieced together, in his own mind, a very fair working hypothesis before he folded the letter carefully and put it in his pocket. As he did so, the reverend gentleman spoke again.

"In a rough way, I am acquainted with the text of that letter, sir," said "Therefore, I am quite prepared to hear you say what you undoubtedly will-that is, that you cannot act in the matter."

"I'm by no means sure that I won't In fact, I think it probable that I will," replied Dick.

He spoke rather sharply, for the smugness of the parson somehow got on his nerves to an extent that roused him almost entirely from his usual fatalistic calm. His petty loss of temper was rewarded as that sort of thing seldom is. The young girl looked up at him: the color came back into her face; first flushing it, and then leaving it in its own ivory tints. And Dick would have been either more or less than human had he not responded, mentally, to the gratitude and hope which that pure, girlish face expressed, though the lips uttered no word.

"In that case, I fear that your chivalry in espousing what I cannot but regard as a quixotic cause in answer to the appeal of an excellent, but hysterical lady, will hardly meet with the success hoped for," sneered the parson ponderously. "Moreover, I question if, in that case, you are not doing far more harm than good in raising hopes which are bound to come to nothing.

The lines about Mrs. Jameson's reddened lips tightened ominously. girl winced. Hot anger flamed up in Dick's breast, but his habitual self-control stood him in good stead.

"You take the affair rather too seriously, Mr. Bellinger," said he lightly. "These things usually are very simple when one takes them the right way.

"May Heaven grant that you take this one in the right way, then," said Mrs. Jameson, sniffing, and dabbing harder than ever at her eves. "Heaven harder than ever at her eyes. grant that you may find a right way or a wrong way, or any way at all, so long as Freddy is cleared. I've always tried to be a good woman, but if there's anything in the world that can be doneanything-I'm ready for it If one has to fight the devil with fire, I'll stand to it until I burn to a cinder!"

"Augusta!" exclaimed the divine severely. Edith Raymond, moving closer, took the little old lady's hand in both hers. Mrs. Jameson sat up straight; her eyes showed no signs of tears, now, and her attitude indicated that she was prepared for battle.

"I mean it-every word!" she declared stoutly. "All I want is to find

the fire, that's all."

"You're right—quite right," said Dick, nodding hearty approval. He found that he began to feel a most unexpected respect for this bedizened little old woman. "I'll try and see that the fire's on hand, if it's needed," he went on, "but we mustn't forget that it also will be necessary to locate the devil."

"That's already done," snapped Mrs. Jameson. "There are two of them-

one of each sex."

The clergyman sighed, but said noth-

ing.

"Good!" said Dick cheerily. "That much is settled, then. Now tell me, please, exactly what has happened. That this young Pendavid is a lieutenant, presumably of the artillery, that he has the good fortune to be affianced to Miss Raymond, here, and that he is accused of something—that much I have gathered from this letter. But that's as far as I can go. The letter mentions two other persons. I imagine they must be the devils of whom you spoke, Mrs. Jameson."

"If the name of the man is Raines, and that of the woman is Hall, then they certainly are," returned the lady addressed, with great decision.

Here the mountainous clergyman

held up a fat hand in protest.

"I cannot listen to this. It is outrageous!" he boomed. "I would say to you, Mr. Bannister, that both of these people are in honorable positions—in fact, highly placed. The lady I have not the honor of knowing personally, but it is beyond doubt that she is a person of the most unblemished character in every sense of the word——"

Here Mrs. Jameson sniffed, and, therefore, Mr. Bellinger repeated, with

still greater impressiveness: "In every sense of the word. And the man is—"

"A nasty, swindling, cowardly scoundrel," remarked the little old lady, finishing the sentence, but her cousin went

on, unheeding:

"The man, Mr. Raines, is a wealthy—very wealthy—and most respectable business man. He has some tendencies which I, as a clergyman, deplore, it is true. Nevertheless, he is one of our prominent citizens, justly looked up to. In fact, a pillar of the community, and one of its solid men. By implication, my cousin, Mrs. Jameson, has given us the idea that these two have been plotting to the prejudice of her nephew. It is monstrous to make such an accusation without absolute proof. Moreover, the idea is absurd. People do not plot in such ways, as you, Mr. Bannister, as a man of the world, should know."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Bellinger," said Dick, very gently. "Such things are done—occasionally. I have some

reason to know it."

He smiled as he said it, but it was not a mirthful smile, and his expression was such that even the ponderous old minister saw that this was not a subject to be continued. Poor Dick had but too much cause to know whereof he spoke. His own great disaster had been caused by circumstances very similar to these which seemed to threaten this young officer. Nothing in the world-not even the pale-faced girl sitting there—could have roused his sympathies for the young lieutenant as this similarity had done. No one could understand as could he the mental anxiety and despair of poor young Pendavid, and Dick resolved to go a very long way outside the limits of the law before this unknown Freddy should have in full the experience which he himself had gone through. He turned sharply to Mrs. Jameson.

"Who is this Mrs. Hall?" he de-

manded.

"She's his colonel's wife. Colonel Hall is much older than she."

"And this man Raines?"

"Daniel Raines, head of the great

contracting firm. You must have heard of him."

"Yes. I know him, though I'd no idea he was here. And these two, you say, are conspiring against young Pendavid?"

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"Yes."

"Mrs. Hall did so because she was in love with him, I suppose, and he preferred Miss Raymond, here."

The little old lady fairly gasped. "How on earth could you know that?" she cried. "But it's true—perfectly true."

Dick smiled, but made no other reply. There was little credit in his guessing the sequence of events; thus far, he had merely outlined his own crushing experience, and the two, up to that point, were identical.

"Just what part do you attribute to Raines in this conspiracy, Mrs. Jameson?" Dick asked. "What is his motive?"

For the first time the older lady hesitated. She glanced at Edith, and Dick, following the direction of her look, saw the color surge into the girl's face, and then retreat, leaving it deathly white once more. "I think I understand," he said, but she would not be spared thus; and, controlling herself with a visible effort, spoke bravely.

"He—he wanted me to marry him," she said. "He asked me to many times, and, of course, I wouldn't. The last time I told him that Freddy and I were engaged. Then he became very angry, and swore he'd be revenged on us both."

"I see. And so he and Mrs. Hall joined forces. They cooked up some plan, I suppose, to prove that he tried to force his unwelcome attentions on her, and with Raines as a witness, induced Colonel Hall to prefer charges of 'conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.' Am I right?"

Edith sank back in her chair, her lips trembling, and it was Mrs. Jameson who replied. "No—no—oh, no!" said she, with a little shuddering sigh. "It's much worse than that—I thought you knew. I don't know that I can tell it exactly right, but perhaps you'll under-

stand. It seems that the government always had mines here in the harbor. But now it's changing them all around, and putting in fresh ones, so as to blow up the Spanish ships, if any should come. Freddy was one of the officers who had charge of this. But there was a lot of work of different kinds to be done; I don't know just what. But part of it was let to a civilian contractor—this Raines."

"And Mr. Raines undertook it, I may add," put in the clergyman unctuously, "from purely patriotic motives. So small an affair would not repay his time and labor, from a financial point of

Dick smiled again. He had reason to know that nearly anything would repay Raines from a financial point of view, just then. In fact, the money upon which Dick at that moment was living had been extracted from that gentleman, much against his will, and though the sum was large, it was one of the least of his recent losses. In fact, Raines, for all his huge paper for-

being sorely pressed for money.

"It seems that Freddy was sent to supervise some of the work that Raines was doing," Mrs. Jameson went on. "He had with him some sort of a map of how the mines were put down, or where they were to be put, or something. I don't understand exactly."

tune, most of which was tied up, was

"I do," said Dick. "The mine-field

plans. Go on, please." "Well, as I said, Freddy had these plans with him one day. He wouldn't let any one see them-he wouldn't let them out of his hands. It seems that a lot of foreign nations would like them, and would pay for them well. That night it was so late when he finished using the plans that he found the safe where they usually were kept had been locked, and the only officer who knew the combination had gone away, not knowing that the plans were not there, in their place. Freddy didn't dare keep them overnight, and in his trouble he went to this man Raines. Raines allowed him to put them in an inner compartment of his safe. Freddy did so-and in the morning they were

She began to cry once more, but pulled herself together, and would have gone on, had her cousin not interrupted her. "There is one thing, Mr. Bannister, which Mrs. Jameson has not mentioned," he declaimed, "When Frederick placed these plans in the inner compartment of that safe, he locked them there himself, and retained both the keys. To the outer safe there is, of course, a combination lock. Frederick knew this combination as, of course, did Mr. Raines. But he alone had access to the inner compartment. Therefore, it is reasoned, it was he who took the plans,'

"I see. But it's not very well reasoned. A man isn't going to ruin his whole career by an utterly disgraceful crime just for the fun of it," remarked "This young man had no vital

need for money, I take it."

To Dick's astonishment and dismay the little old lady broke down utterly. Rocking herself to and fro in her seat, she wept with an abandonment to grief which she had not, up to that time, displayed. It was a matter of some minutes before she could speak again. Dick waited with what patience he could, the clergyman looked on with something like consternation, and Edith gathered the older woman into her arms as one might have gathered a child. When at last Mrs. Jameson, with an effort that did credit to her determination, succeeded once more in partially controlling herself, and raised her face, it could be seen that the last remnants of her erstwhile gorgeous complexion had yielded to the influence of the tears that had run over it, and had resolved itself into a series of grotesque streaks. Yet, somehow, Dick had no inclination to laugh.

"Freddy did need money," she said bravely. "He told me so himself, and -and I wouldn't give it to him. I'd never stinted him before. This time he'd been playing cards. And I thought the lesson of having to pay his losses

might do him good."

'You see," remarked Mr. Bellinger.

Again the girl winced, and again Mrs. Jameson sat up straight and prepared for battle, the accent of doubt doing more than anything else could have done to bring her back to her normal

state of self-control.

A sharp answer rose to Dick's lips, and doubtless would have been delivered, had it not been for the phrase in Nita's letter which flashed through his mind: "Don't mind what Mr. Bellinger says or does. He means well, but he's an awful goose-or rather, gander-and doesn't count." He turned away impatiently to Tug, who at that moment entered the room, his face full of trou-

"Well-what is it?" asked Dick sharply, though in an undertone.

"Outside," whispered Tug, in return. "A bull watchin' de house, here. I was pipin' him off from de front winders, to be sure. Now dere comes anodder, an' joins him. I know de odder. He's one of de best dey got, an' he's drawin' his pay from Uncle Sam, an' not no city. Dey're both on de job, now. So I come in here to give you de high of-

"United States detectives-are you sure, Tug?" Dick whispered back

eagerly.

"Ain't I seen enough of 'em to be sure?" asked Tug in reply, looking reproachfully at his master. "Say, you ain't found me makin' many errors in dese ways up to now, I guess."

"No. You'd hardly make a mistake; I know that well," admitted Dick, "But you couldn't have brought better news

just now."

Tug drew back a little in astonishment, and looked at his chief as though apprehensive for the latter's sanity. He had known Dick's mind to work in strange channels—had known that many times-and long ago had given up trying to follow these channels comprehendingly. But the idea that any person could really welcome the presence of two detectives was so inconceivable that once more he permitted himself to be surprised. There was no doubt, however, but what Dick was both sane and in earnest, and with a

sigh Tug gave the problem up as he had given up so many similar ones before.

"Is dere anyt'ing fer me ter do?" he

asked.

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"Yes. It's dark now. Go out under that big tree by the rear corner of the house and dig a hole—say four feet by seven. Don't take any light, if you can help it. Dig until I tell you to stop, or unless one of those detectives approaches you. If that last should happen, bolt into the house, and run into the cellar. Do you understand?"

"You ain't a-gonter croak him!" said Tug, in a hoarse and horrified whisper. Murder had never been in his line, and except when absolutely necessary he balked at it. Dick only

smiled.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

"Nope. What you say goes," replied Tug doggedly; and, turning, shuffled away. Dick came back to his visitors.

"There's little time to waste," said he. "Or, at least, so I'm led to believe from what my man has just told me. So we must act at once, or the affair may complicate itself and need more time to clear up. When was young Pendavid put in arrest?"

"Not until this afternoon. Colonel Hall wouldn't have done it then, he told me, except that he seemed to have no choice," replied Mrs. Jameson.

"Good! That means that he isn't the only one suspected. That's all as it should be. Now I must ask you, all three of you, to put yourselves unreservedly in my hands for the next hour or two. I haven't time to explain why. Are you willing?"

"I most certainly am," answered the little old lady, with the utmost deci-

sion.

Miss Raymond sprang to her feet.

"Try me—only try me!" she begged. "I won't fail—I'll promise you that—if it's humanly possible. Only let me heln!"

Even while speaking, she had risen, and was walking mechanically to the door in her impatience to begin. Dick walked with her until they were a little removed from the other two before

speaking.

"There's nothing very difficult for you to do, my dear young lady, but it's of the very highest importance," said "All I want is for you to go, alone and on foot, to your hotel. Once there, go straight to your room and stay there, admitting no one. You needn't be afraid on the way. A man will follow you. It was that he might follow you that I wish you to go. He's a United States detective. There are two of them watching the house, which is one too many. Make no mistake, thoughit's a good sign. It means that the plans haven't been recovered, and that they are watching every one. So that the one who took them probably has Now go, please, and go them still. quickly."

Without speaking, she turned to leave, pulling down her veil as she did so; then suddenly paused, and, pushing the veil upward with one hand, she caught one of Dick's in the other; and, before he could prevent her, raised it to her lips. For the first time in many weary years, Dick felt the hot blood surging into his face as he stood watching the young girl as she hurried down the dark street-and, as he thought, with one of the detectives skulking after her. The other lurked in the deep shadows of the trees on the opposite side of the street. Without apparently looking at him, Dick hurried back to the parson and his companion.

Evidently there had been some discussion between the two during Dick's short absence. The parson had risen, and was pacing heavily up and down the room, while the little lady sat very straight in her chair, her eyes snapping ominously. She would have spoken, but her cousin was too quick for her.

"Mr. Bannister," said he, in his most impressive manner, "I wish to know where you sent that young girl. In fact, I must demand an immediate answer to that question. I feel myself obliged to say that I distrust this business from beginning to end. She, at least, must not be drawn into it. And now——"

Time was passing, and time was important-more, it was vital-and speech seemed likely to wear on into a sermon of some length. Already Dick could hear the muffled strokes of Tug's pick as it attacked the soft turf. He did not in the least wish to offend this pompous old parson, who could so easily disarrange all Dick's simple but accurately adjusted plans, yet he dared waste no

more time.

'I'm awfully sorry to interrupt you, but there's a lot to be done yet, Mr. Bellinger," he said. "As to your question concerning Miss Raymond, it's not difficult to answer. I asked her to go to her room in the hotel, and, for the present, to stay there; that's all. And now I'm going to ask a similar service of you and Mrs. Jameson. That is, I want you to go into the next room and sit there for a while without leaving it. It won't be for long, and I'll see that you have some dinner," he finished, in his most insinuating manner.

But the reverend gentleman was not

to be cajoled.

"I decline to go in there at all," he bellowed. "In the first place, sir, I am not inclined to place implicit confidence in your assertion that you sent Miss Raymond home, and I intend to go at once to the hotel, in order to verify that statement-or disprove it. And, in the second, before I can become a party to your practices, I wish to know what they are; I must be told-nay, I must have proof absolute-that what you intend to do is of a nature that I can countenance."

Dick said nothing, but for the moment he was almost in despair. There seemed no way of shutting this man off. Outside he could hear Tug at his

work more plainly than ever.

"I confess, sir, that I cannot in the least understand the plans which you claim to have made for the relief of

this foolish boy-

"Samuel," here broke in Mrs. Jameson, with the most evident and heartfelt sincerity, and with deadly earnestness, "it is not in the least necessary or even desirable that you should un-derstand these plans. What you must

do is to obey to the fullest extent what Mr. Bannister may think necessary to carry out those plans. And don't refuse. Samuel. I don't wish to refer to benefits and favors which I've conferred in the past, or to hint at future ones-but this I'll say; if you do not do as you have been requested, and do it at once, I'll sell you up without mercy. I'll see that you're beggared. more than that, what I know of you, if published, would keep you out of every pulpit in Christendom-and I'll publish There!"

The fat clergyman seemed fairly to shrink in size, as the words struck him like physical blows. Without a word, he turned, and staggered into the room which had been indicated. Even Dick felt sorry for him; and it is probable that Mrs. Jameson had not finished speaking before she had repented in a

measure, at least.

"Indeed, what I alluded to wasn't so very bad, Mr. Bannister," said she. "Besides, it was a very long time ago, now, and the temptation surely was great. Still, I had to say what I did, to make him mind. Besides, the way he spoke of Freddy as 'that foolish boy' implied that he believed in Freddy's guilt, and that made me angry. But do you really think that before very long we can have the last scene of this awful play-the happy return, you know, and all that sort of thing---the climax, in short?"

She looked at him wistfully, and he laughed reassuringly as he answered. "Personally, I have no doubt whatever," said he. "Still, you mustn't look for climaxes. I like to prove how easy it is to play upon the stupidity of other people, and so it's the artistic anti-climaxes that I pride myself upon. You'll see-we'll be having one directly

-but I must go, now."

Even as he spoke, Dick turned and ran, for from the front of the house came the sound for which he had been listening—a hoarse challenge. Youse by de house, dere! What you tryin' ter do?

No answer. There was a sound as though Tug had dropped his pick, and that was all. Dick had run through the house into the cellar, and was now standing just inside the door which gave upon a short flight of steps, leading directly to the grounds outside. A moment of tense waiting was followed by a last challenge, and that by the sound of running feet. Tug darted into the cellar. His wits were quick, as they had need to be; and, as Dick laid a hand on his shoulder as he ran past, he wheeled instantly and took his station on the other side of the door.

The detective was only a few steps behind. He plunged down the shallow stairs into the grip of two powerful pairs of arms, which were waiting to receive him. The police officer was neither coward nor weakling. He did his best, and for a second or two there was a scuffle. But it was very useless; the odds were far too great. In another moment, he was lying on the ground, his wrists fast in his own handcuffs, while Tug was busily lashing his ankles with a piece of clothesline to a pillar which supported the floor above. The detective watched the proceedings for a little in sullen silence.

"You two ducks a-gonter croak me?" he asked, at last. "You better. It won't be none too good fer youse if I get outer this—I give you that straight

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"No. I think we'll let you live for a little while yet," said Dick, with a pleased smile, as he straightened from his work. "I'm sorry—honestly sorry—it was necessary for us to treat you this way, but—"

"Youse ain't half so sorry as you will be," observed the policeman.

"Now, that's where you're mistaken. We're all going to be glad—you see if we're not. You'll leave here with joy in your heart because we'll have put you in the way of promotion. But, in order to do that, we'll have to leave you for a little while now. Cupid!"

There was a bouncing and scrattling on the stairs, and Cupid appeared. He looked at his master and at the prostrate form. Of the latter he did not approve, as those who knew him best could tell; but he was far too well-bred

to voice that disapproval in any way. "Guard him!" said Dick. Cupid immediately lay down by the policeman's side. He was not wholly unused to these episodes.

"Now, my man, if you start to make a sound, that dog will kill you; otherwise, you're as safe as you would be in your own house," said Dick. "We're leaving you now for a little, as I said."

"Dat's all right fer now, but when I get outer here—" the man commenced, but at that point Cupid rose to his feet, and gurgled a little, far down in his throat. Silence ensued.

down in his throat. Silence ensued. "Come, Tug," said Dick, and

together they hurried away.

They repaired what damages had been given in the scuffle, and Tug followed his master as he hurried out of the door and into the street. For a little they went on without speaking. It was Dick who broke the silence.

"I was thinking I'd best tell you what we're doing. I hadn't time before, Tug. I want you to see how important it is to obey orders quickly—and we'll have to act quickly now."

Tug nodded eagerly, and Dick told him the story which he had heard from his visitors. Tug heard him through in silence.

"It's dis guy Raines what's got de map, all right," said he, with conviction, as Dick finished. "Say, no court ever'll give dat little boy wit' stripes on his pants anyt'ing fer dat. De case won't stand."

"You don't know that," said Dick. "This will be a court-martial, and even if he wasn't convicted, it would be a stain on his record that he'd never get over if the thing wasn't cleared up. sent one detective away after Miss Raymond and had you dig to bring the other-he thought you were going to bury something-possibly our vis-I didn't want to send him away, even if we could; we'll need him later. It's safe to say that Raines still has those plans. Suspicion still rests on every one, more or less, or had until Lieutenant Pendavid was arrested. We're going to his office now to get them. Have you got a sandbag with you?"

"Have I got me shoit?" demanded

Tug indignantly.

They passed through the brightly lighted business streets of the little city down toward the water front, and the government reservation. It was just outside the gates of this reservation that the temporary building in which the contractor had his office had been placed. Dick knew this much, and, though he never had seen this individual building before, he had seen many of its mates. The lower floor, he knew, would probably be devoted to storage purposes; the offices would be above. And to his joy, when he came in sight of the place, a light shone out of one of the upper rooms, while all the rest of the windows were dark.

"Heavens, but I hope that front door's unlocked!" he said, thinking

aloud.

"It will be; I got me keys," replied Tug. "But we don't need 'em," he added a moment later, as he tried the door in question and found that it yielded to his touch. "What you want me to do now?"

"Take off your shoes and follow me into that room up there as soon as the man who is in it has his back turned," replied Dick promptly, and went on up

the wooden stairs.

Raines was seated at his desk, his white face peering at the door as Dick came into it, and his hand resting upon a pistol that lay conveniently near. He recognized Dick instantly, that was evident, but it was evident, too, that he recognized him with relief, for the color flowed back into his heavy-jowled countenance. He threw himself back in his chair and laughed sneeringly.

"Hello! This is an unexpected pleasure," said he. "What's the matter—broke again? You've come to the wrong shop if you are, though; I haven't ten dollars in the house—and I know you don't steal amounts as small as that, Bannister, or whatever it may

be you call yourself now.'

"No. We neither of us steal amounts

as small as that, Raines," agreed Dick placidly. "That's where the resemblance of our methods ceases, for I don't take anything that is honestly gained, and I don't swindle. But I didn't come to make you disgorge any of your ill-gotten money this time; it's entirely another thing."

"Good!" laughed Raines. "Let's hear what it is. If I can do anything for you without trouble or expense, hang me if I don't believe I'd do it! Your nerve takes me. You never seem to think I could hand you over to the

police\_\_\_"

"No, or you'd have done it long ago. Besides, you couldn't even make an attempt—and live. There is something that you can do for me, Raines, and you are going to do it—now."

Dick had taken a seat by the desk, and, as he was speaking, leaned suddenly forward, with that catlike quickness that was one of his characteristics, deftly snatched the pistol from under the other's hand, and dropped it into his own pocket. Raines snatched the desk telephone, and held the receiver to his ear. For a few seconds Dick spoke no word, but watched, smiling.

"Raines, do you suppose, really, that I'd be as careless as that?" he drawled after a little. "Why, man, I disconnected one of the wires from the binding post here at the box when I first began talking. Otherwise—well, you know I used to work alone, but now—

look behind you!"

It is almost impossible for any one to disobey that command, if it is suddenly given. Raines did look behind him. There was no one there, of course; he had been sitting facing the door. When he turned his head back, Tug was in the room, his blackjack ready.

"Don't go to the window," said Dick quickly. "It's all up, Raines; you may as well make up your mind to that. And

now I want that key."

"What key?" the other managed to say, after once or twice moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

"You know. The one to the inner compartment of that safe."

"Colonel Hall has 'em both."

By way of answer, Dick took from his pocket a silk handkerchief and a stick, something over a foot long, and laid them out on the desk before him, as Raines watched intently.

"Do you know what those things are

for?" he asked.

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The contractor shook his head.

"It's a little trick I learned in the far East. It leaves no scar. One knots this handkerchief loosely around your head, passes the stick through, and twists—twists slowly; very, very slowly. There's no pain at first. Then, as it tightens more and more—well, I won't describe it; there's no use in that. You know what an ordinary rack-lashing is, and what power it has. Eventually the bones of your skull would crack, of course, but that would take a long time, and long before the end of that time you will have done what you're told to. Now, give me that kev."

With a gasp the man felt in an inner pocket, found a small, flat key, and threw it on the desk. Dick took it; and, going to the large safe, tried it on the lock of the inner compartment; the outer was open. The inner doors swung open, and Dick left them so, returning

to the desk.

"Now," said he, with ominous quiet,

"hand over the plans."

After the hesitation of an instant, Raines pulled an envelope from the same pocket as that which had contained the key, and handed it over. Dick took it and laid it down. "It won't do, Raines—and don't try it again," said he. "You're not good enough—and you're too badly scared. Hand over the plans—and do it now—do you hear?"

Raines looked first at one and then at the other of his captors, but saw no encouragement there. He quailed visibly. Dick picked up the handkerchief and stick, and Raines drew forth another envelope, a counterpart of the first, even to the seals, and tossed it upon the desk. Dick took it and

laughed.

"You were going to try a little flim-

flam game on the foreign emissary who intended to buy these, eh?" said he. "You couldn't have substituted the envelopes, though, Raines; you're too clumsy—and too scared. You've been thinking over this thing, and what the government'll do to you if you're caught, and so on, until you've lost your nerve. That's what made it so easy for us."

While speaking, Dick had ripped open the envelope and examined the inclosure. Then he looked at his watch before refolding the big sheets and re-

turning them.

"Good!" he almost shouted. "Here are the plans all right, Tug, and it's exactly two hours and three minutes from the time those three people came to the house. How's that?"

to the house. How's that?"
"It's goin' some," Tug admitted dryly. "We ain't done, though, yet."

ly. "We ain't done, unous.", you "We? Oh, yes; our part's over, practically. You go home and fetch that policeman we put in storage there. Tell him what's happened, and tell him he can take all the credit of getting the plans back. He won't bear any malice then; you can bank on that—it'll make him a captain, probably. Then we'll get that boy out of arrest and send him to the girl."

"So's to give 'em de way to get one glad day—de one when dey gits t'rough wit' de divorce court," remarked the pessimistic Mr. Flynn, whose three marital ventures had not proved to be fortunate ones. "An' where do youse come in on dis? I don't see none er de long green in it up ter now."

"There are lots of things you don't see, Tug," his master replied. "But—even if we've done nothing else worth while—well, doing a service to the flag, now that war is coming, is a thing

worth while, don't you think?"

Tug made no reply; but, turning, went away on his errand. For a while he was evidently wrapped in unwonted thought. "Well, maybe de boss is right," he said aloud, with an air of one who makes an astonishing discovery. "I guess he's right at dat. I'm kinder stuck on dat flag meself—but I never knowed it till now."





HERE were two day coaches on the train—passenger trains run light on Christmas Day. The porter strolled through them both, holding the yellow telegram, but though women start-

ed and men glanced up sharply, nobody answered to the name of Miss Janet Wareham. There remained the sleeper—christened Archimedes-and the dining car. Half a dozen hand bags and suit cases were scattered about the sleeper, but the only occupant was a bald-headed and apparently choleric middle-aged gentleman who glowered indignantly when the porter remarked: "Telegram for Miss Janet Wareham, sah?" and retorted: "Do I look as if I know Miss Janet Wareham?" which, while not precisely answering the query, apparently satisfied the porter that he did not, and he passed on to the dining car.

There were a dozen people in there, among them a brown-eyed young lady, sufficiently attractive to be pleasant to look upon, especially if one was unfortunate enough to be traveling upon Christmas morning. She had therefore been receiving her full share of silent attention, which may have accounted for the charming color in her cheeks and the extreme aloofness of her demeanor. It was most annoying, unpleasant, and unseasonable to be travelling, and traveling alone at that, upon Christmas morning, but she had but two hours more of it, and then—

"Telegram for Miss Janet Wareham." The young lady started from her seat, all the color in her face suddenly outblown and her brown eyes wide with fear. The porter, stepping forward, put the telegram beside her plate, and waited. She nervously pulled open a silver purse, handed him a coin without glancing at it, and then tore open the envelope. Instantly the color surged back into her cheeks, and, crushing the telegram in her hand, she nodded to the waiter for her bill.

"How soon do we reach Washington?" she asked. Her voice was stern, but the sternness was not for him.

"In half an hour, miss," he answered submissively.

"Thank you," she returned regally, but the tip that she was leaving upon the tray made his eyes shine.

"Thank you, miss. Wish you Merry Christmas, miss," he said, performing marvelous feats in securing her belongings first, that he might offer them to her. The girl stopped, and her face softened enchantingly.

"It is so nice to hear that," she said.
"I didn't expect to for two hours yet.
I hope that you will have many of

By the time she had reached her seat, however, the softness had retreated before a mounting indignation. It was presuming of him to send that telegram as if he thought she couldn't take care of herself or—a rigid honesty challenging that statement—as if she had given him any reason, any reason, to think that she wanted to be met at Baltimore. She leaned back, planning the telegram that she should send in reply. She could send it from the train, but so long as she had to change

cars at Washington, anyway, she preferred to do it then; there would be a satisfaction in seeing the agent take it.

Half an hour later, a brown-eyed young woman, in an extremely stylish and becoming brown traveling suit, stood before the telegraph window writing something rapidly upon a blank.

Mr. Robert Dudley, Broadmeadows, Md.: JANET WAREHAM.

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She pushed this through the window. paid the charges, and then walked across to the news stand for a magazine. She glanced through one after another, but they all seemed unaccountably dull, as what magazine would not on Christmas morning? Finally, however, she selected a couple, and started for the train gate. Then, for the first time, she became conscious of something unnatural in the big vaulted station. It was Washington-there was no question about that-but where were the crowds, the train announcer, and where was her train? Her glance sped down the long row of closed gates with, beyond them, stretch after stretch of empty track. There was but one gatekeeper in sight; she hurried over

"The train for Broadmeadows?" he repeated. "It went out five minutes ago, miss."

"But I thought we waited here half an hour," she cried. "I came on the Western express. The time-tables gave me half an hour surely."

The gatekeeper's voice became distinctly sympathetic. Perhaps it was because he was undergoing the rare experience of having nothing to do, or perhaps it was the influence of Christmas, or perhaps it was a pair of brown eyes which, all dignity forgotten now, were full of trouble. Whatever it was, he unbent in a manner rarely known to gatekeepers.

"It's too bad, miss. The Western express was late, and Number Sixteen just waited for it, and then pulled out. Somebody ought to have told you."

"I should have looked for myself," Janet answered, bravely struggling with her dismay. "What time will the next train go?"

"Not until three-fifty, I'm afraid, miss," he answered reluctantly.
"Three-fifty! Surely there is one

"Three-fifty! Surely there is one earlier than that!"
"Not to Broadmeadows, miss—that's a side line. There are plenty to Bal-

timore, but you'd have to wait there just as long."

There were almost tears in the brown eyes now; the girl forced them back and tried to thank the man composedly, but when she sank into a seat in the waiting room, the eyes were full of consternation. To have to spend Christmas Day in a railroad station! could still get to Broadmeadows in time for dinner, but to miss the dayall the nonsense and frolics and opening of gifts and the horseback scamper over the brown Maryland hills; instead, to have to spend interminable hours in an empty railroad station. Janet sat up very straight, and a tiny frown dinted the smooth forehead between the dark brows.

That meant that she was thinking seriously and determinedly. As the result of her meditation, she went to the telegraph stand again, and sent a telegram to Broadmeadows. That done, she stood a moment fingering the pad, but presently pushed it from her and turned away decidedly. Her own stupidity had got her into this, and she was not going to ask anybody to help her out, especially, anybody who—

A stronger determination came into her step, and she lifted her chin valiantly. It was a very pretty chin; it was a pity that there was nobody to see and appreciate it; but the man at the parcel room where she went next to check her bag and umbrella never even glanced at her as he tossed the check across the counter. Which shows how we miss opportunities in life.

These transactions had taken exactly seven minutes. It was now four minutes of ten, and she had five hours and fifty-four minutes to wait. She went back to the waiting room to think it

Any other day she could have gone

to the library or even the museum, but everything was closed Christmas morn-She could take a car ride or a The magazine slipped from her cab. fingers and she looked around eagerly; she was not used to be conquered by circumstances. It was ta Christmas problem-given five hours and x to find Christmas. But first one must dis-

cover what x was.

X interpreted in terms of humanity proved to be somewhat discouraging. It included, all told, the station matron, a couple of colored girls giggling in one corner, a dreary-looking shopgirl in another, and a grim old woman clinging to five bags and an umbrella. Janet glanced from the dreary-looking girl to the grim old woman, and a dimple stole into her cheek. Christmas morning though it was, it was funny. "I wonder," she mused, "if I'll work

out even with these other factors. And I wonder which I am the most afraid to tackle, the old woman with the bundles or the girl without any. I think I'll toss up—heads, young ladies; tails,

old ones!

Behind her magazine she deftly tossed a quarter. It fell heads. Somewhat relieved-for at least they had measure of years in common, she went

across to the girl.

"Are you stranded on Christmas Day, too?" she asked, her manner full of pretty apology. "I hope you don't mind my speaking to you; it is so dreary to be all alone. I just missed connections, and have nearly six hours to wait.'

The girl glanced at her, half embar-

rassed, half defiant.

"I ain't waiting for any train," she

"Oh, you are waiting for a friend," Janet interpreted. "That makes a very different matter of it, doesn't it?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "I ain't waiting for friends, either. I came out to get away from Mame-Mame was in one of her tantrums this morning. She's my sister-in-law, and I live with them, but I ain't going to any longer, not if it takes my bottom cent. I can't stand the everlasting nagging. I'd have left long ago if it wasn't

"Who is Bim?" asked Janet. "Do

you mind telling me?"

"Bim? He's next to the youngest, and he's lame. He thinks I'm all right, Bim does, and I guess he's the only one in the world that ever did. I've stood a lot for Bim's sake, but I can't stand things any longer, and I won't, For her to jaw me like that-oh, it's a sweet Christmas I'm having!"

Into Janet's face came a sudden

eagerness.
"Oh," she cried breathlessly, "I wonder if you would do something for me -you and Bim!"

The girl stared. "Me and Bim!" she echoed sarcastically. "I guess! It

looks like it, don't it?"
"But I mean it," Janet pleaded. "See here, I am all alone for hours, and I don't know a soul in the city, and don't know what in the world to do to pass the time. Won't you let me take you and Bim for a ride? Maybe you know some little uptown stores where we could buy some things-or let Bim buy them-don't you? Oh, couldn't we? You don't know how I'd love to.

The girl's eyes, no longer listless now, but shrewd and searching, traveled over the other girl, no detail es-

caping her.

"You must be a queer one," she re-

"Maybe I am," Janet answered, her dimple showing mischievously-it was a funny little dimple lurking at the left corner of her mouth-"but never mind that. Will you come-you and Bim? We can get a cab here at the door, you know."

"I reckon I'd be a fool not to," the girl answered. "I'd do a tougher thing than that to see Mame's face."

"All right, then-we'll call that settled," Janet said. "I wonder"-she looked doubtfully at the grim lady with the bundles and then back to the girl-"do you suppose she would go, too? Or should we have to kidnap her to accomplish it?"

"My soul, you ain't going to ask her, are you?" the girl cried in disgust.

"I'm going to ask her," Janet returned. "I must confess that my hopes are not very flourishing. She doesn't look precisely what one might call responsive. But still, it's Christmas Day, and one can only try. You don't feel moved to try for me, do you?"
"Not on your life," the girl replied

emphatically.

"I suspected as much," Janet sighed. "Well, I can do no more than fail."

She crossed the room to where the lady in question sat submerged in bundles, or as nearly submerged as a person of so much evident character could be. The conversation was extremely brief; in less than a moment Janet returned.

"Got turned down, didn't you?" the

girl asked curiously

"I suppose that that is the name of the process. She told me that when she wanted to take rides, she was capable of taking them by herself."

"Well, that's just what she looks like.

I knew you were a fool to go."

The girl's voice was full of satisfaction, and yet beneath the words Janet detected a dim spirit of championship that warmed a little the wide empty morning. She smiled brightly back at the girl.

"Now for Bim," she said. "I was going to get him some candy, but maybe he'd rather have a different kindthese aren't exactly boys' candies here,

are they?"

A flash passed over the girl's face; it was gone in a second, but Janet's quick wits had caught and interpreted it as quickly as it came, so quickly indeed that there was not a break in her sentences.

"But you and I-that's different.

Suppose we get some for ourselves?" The candy stand furnished a box of Huyler's-two, indeed, for Janet sud-She denly remembered the matron. was turning away when the florist's stand suggested the next thing. She thrust the candy into the girl's hands and hurried-she was always an impatient creature—on to that, returning a moment later with three clusters of violets.

"One for you and one for me and one for the matron," she explained. "To think of doing one's Christmas shopping in a railway station! Isn't it

funny?

The girl eyed her violets curiously. "Say-you must have money to burn, she exclaimed. She began pinning the violets to her shabby jacket, then pulled them off, half shamefaced, half defiant, "I reckon I'll go and give a slop to my hair," she said. "I had such a grouch on this morning that I didn't care."

"All right," Janet nodded. "Don't

hurry—there are hours, you know."

She slipped a cluster of violets beneath the gold string of one of the candy boxes and went over to the matron with a pretty plea for their acceptance. The matron was not the grim old lady with the bundles, and her interest was quick and vivid.

"It surely is too bad for you," she declared, when Janet had explained the situation, "and there ain't anybody here to help you out, I'm afraid. It's always empty on Christmas Day. Other times

there are rafts of children."

"I've found a girl that's going to get a child for me," Janet replied. "Here she comes now. Good-by. I'll be back before three. I mean to stand on the track and hold up the next train if necessary."

She met the girl at the outer doora transformed girl. It wasn't the violets nor the pompadour, now restored to all its impressive magnitude. It was the air. The girl winked gravely.

"Think Mame will jaw me, now," she asked, "driving up in a barouche? My stars, won't she open her eyes, though!

Say, which is your carriage?"

"I'm going to choose," Janet answered promptly. "This is a Christmas expedition—I must have a Christmas-y horse and driver. What do you say to that fifth one? Don't you think his mane looks more festive than the others? Or," with a sudden inspiration, "would you rather have an auto? We can phone for a taxi if there isn't

anything here."
"Say," the girl cried, "do you mean "Say," it? A tooter for mine, every time!

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Gracious, Bim will almost jump out of

is skin!"

"In that case," Janet laughed, "a taxi we must have, by all means. And here, by a Christmas chance, is one this minute, so we shan't have to wait—that is, if it isn't engaged."

It wasn't engaged, and an instant later the cab, with its passengers, was spinning smoothly out one of the avenues. Ten minutes later still, Bim, having been abstracted from a family group, whose amazement was all that even the girl could desire, was sitting enthroned before them, his small face

transfigured with joy.

Bim was speechless at first. The girl looked at Janet, and shook her head, begging mutely that he be not disturbed; she would have scoffed could she have seen the tenderness in her eyes, but Janet, seeing it, felt her own grow dim, and turned to look out into the bright, empty streets. So they rode for half an hour, till Bim stirred and drew a long breath.

"Say," he piped, his small, shrill voice full of awe; "are we going on

forever?

Janet turned quickly.

"We're going for quite a while yet—until we get tired. But there are some things I want to know, and perhaps you can tell me. Do you know a toy shop that would be open to-day?"

"You bet!" Bim responded eagerly.

"You bet!" Bim responded eagerly.
"There's Dennis'. They've got bully soldiers' things there, with straps on 'em—and drums and guns——"

The small voice filled with ecstasy at the mere mention of them. Janet, her face almost as eager as his, gave an order. The cab wheeled about, turned from the smooth avenue south through poor streets, and came to a stop before a small corner shop, whose door stood hospitably open.

Janet held out her hand. "Let's come in, Bim," she said. "I want you to help me choose a soldier suit and

musket and drum."

Bim's eyes, at once shrewd and wistful, childish and pitifully old, scanned her sharply; then, without a word, he

turned, scrambled from the cab, and hitched his way into the shop. Janet, following, found him fingering a slazy soldier suit with glaring straps.

"It's—it's fifty cents," he said, looking up at her. The thin voice carried a note of resignation; fate had been denying things to Bim all his life—it was possession for which he was unprepared. For answer, Janet lifted down the suit from its nail and put it into his arms.

"Now for the drum and musket,

Bim," she said.

Bim limped along beside her; he could only point silently to the most desirable musket, but when it came to the drums, Janet felt a twitch at her skirt. Bim's voice was husky.

"Say," he whispered, "kin ye afford

it? It makes an awful lot."

Something caught in the girl's throat, To purchase paradise with a dollar and a half! But she smiled lightly down at the child.

"I think I can afford it. Christmas comes only once a year, you know."

Bim said nothing for a moment. He drew a long breath of sheer ecstasy. Then his face shadowed. "But I reckon Ted can play with 'em sometimes," he said, with difficulty.

The other girl flashed about. "I reckon he can't!" she declared. "Not unless he treats you better. But I've got one or two things for the kids," she added shamefacedly. "I didn't get them anything before."

"Let's get something for each of them," Janet suggested eagerly. "Bim

can tell us what."

They poked about the little shop, exploring and discovering. Finally, loaded with purchases, they climbed into the cab again, and looked at each other, the girl doubtfully, Bim breathlessly. Was the fairy tale over?

Janet pulled out a tiny gold watch.
"I thought so," she exclaimed. "I
didn't eat much breakfast, and I'm hungry. I think the next thing must be
lunch. Let's go to the New Willard."

The girl's face fairly whitened. "They'll guy us," she muttered.

But Janet's chin was lifted. "Let anybody try," she retorted.

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In a silence too large for words, the girl and Bim were whirled to the New Willard, solemnly climbed down from the cab, and then, still silent, the girl with her head in the air, Bim clinging to musket and drum, though finally persuaded to leave the soldier suit in the cab, they followed the waiter down the dining room. But when she saw the menu, the girl capitulated.

"We ain't been introduced—me and these things," she said. "I guess you'll have to do the say-so business."

have to do the say-so business."
"You shall try," Janet gleefully ordained, "every single thing you've never tasted before. I know just how you feel—it's the way I did when I went to an Italian restaurant once. But it's ever so much fun—truly it is, or we wouldn't do it."

It was ever so much fun. Before long, all the waiters and guests in the room were sharing in it. But nobody at Bim's table cared. They tasted and criticised and compared recklessly, condemning some of the chef's most famous achievements, gayly patronizing others, eating little in reality, but thinking that they were eating a great deal, till Bim's ecstasy reached its culmination at the appearance upon his plate of a pea-green and rose-pink horse, which investigation proved to be "Ice cream!" Bim cried in a stage whisper that thrilled the room.

But it was over at last, and they were out on the sidewalk once more, and Janet looked at her Christmas comrades with a wistful smile. It was curious how reluctant she was to part with them.

"I suppose it's home now," she said.
"You don't know the difference you've made. It will be only two hours now, and I can stand that."

"Say," the girl replied, "do you want us to go back with you?" "Oh, will you?" Janet cried.

"I guess we'll stand by, all right, won't we, Bim? We'd be pretty low

down if we didn't."

Bim nodded. He, too, could make a

Christmas gift; he divined it, though he could not put it into words. He could wait, two hours, with his hands itching to put on that uniform. There was hero stuff in Bim.

Back in the station, the matron

greeted them like an old friend.

"I was wishing you'd come," she said. "You'd have had your children now, if you wanted them." She nodded to the corner of the waiting room, where, encamped, Janet's eager eyes discovered—Italy; two little brown, gayly kerchiefed women, surrounded by a small, surging mob of children. Some were laughing, some crying, but all were brown, dusky-eyed, and adorable

"Oh!" Janet cried, with a quick breath, and then she made a dash across the room,

The little brown women looked up with interest at the so curious, but still attractive, young lady who seemed in the very great hurry. They shook their heads in answer to her eager questions; only one, trying to hush a wailing child, smiled brilliantly, and remarked: "Hongree."

"Hungry," Janet echoed pitifully.
"Hungry—on Christmas Day!" She
snatched up one of the babies and
nodded imperiously to the girl and

"Come and help!" she cried. "We're going to the restaurant."

They came—Bim eager, the girl outwardly deliberate, inwardly pleased, "It's a pity they're so afraid of dirt,"

"It's a pity they're so afraid of dirt," she remarked. "What do you want me to do, anyhow?"

"I don't exactly know—maybe if you'd pick up that little one in the blue dress—that's right. Mercy, do they think we are going to eat them? Oh, why don't I know some Italian? Do you suppose they'd understand macaroni or banana? I guess the best way will be to hurry them through to the restaurant, and then they'll have to understand."

The plan of campaign outlined was promptly carried out. Janet, with two babies, the girl with one, and Bim with commanding hand upon one of the boys, they trooped into the restaurant, followed by the excited, gesticulating mothers with the rest of the children. Janet was right—they understood, then. In an incredibly short time, the families, ranged upon stools along the lunch counter, were busy with soup, sandwiches, olives, fruit, and even pie. It was an absorbing occupation. The girl drew a long breath when at last her particular division began to show signs of repletion.

"Say, that's the biggest stunt I've done in a year; Christmas bargain counters aren't in it. I don't believe they'd had anything to eat for a month. Will you look at that kid? She's going to sleep with a banana in her mouth! It strikes me it's about time to quit, else they'll all be doing high tumbling off these stools. There's another, putting her head in the bowl!"

"Just a minute," Janet's distracted voice responded. "I've got to pay, and they're counting up. Did you ever see children get sleepy so fast? There, now, I think we're ready, and the procession can start. Hold up your head, Brown-eyes—Oh, please, just two min-

utes!"

She caught the child's hand, and softly shook her awake, snatched a swaying baby from the nearest stool, gave a hasty glance about at her lieutenants, and then the procession started. A train had just come in, and there were a few passengers trickling through the waiting rooms; they all turned and stared curiously at the stylish young woman, apparently leading an Italian kindergarten, with a supplement in the shape of a small, white-faced cripple. A young man hurrying across the room gave a casual glance, wheeled promptly, and headed off the kindergarten.

"Janet!" he cried. "You here!"
Janet started, nearly dropping her

baby.

"Certainly I am here," she replied; her accent implied that it was, of all places, the one where one might have expected to find her.

"But-I don't understand."

"I missed my train," Janet informed

him loftily. "I was late in and didn't know it, and stopped to buy a magazine—" The magazine reminded her of something else, and she turned sternly. "But why are you here? Didn't you get my telegram?"

"I am here because I was detained at the last moment. I've sent three telegrams to your train. Where did you

send mine?"

"To Broadmeadows, of course. It was to tell you by no means to meet

me in Baltimore."

This delivered in a very firm voice, although with downcast eyes, because, of course, she had to watch the baby she was carrying, should have been withering, but the young man seemed quite unmoved.

"May I ask," he inquired, with a meekness which was not at all decep-

tive, "what you are doing?"

"I am carrying the baby to the wait-

ing room."

"Ah, yes. Are you going to carry all the babies, one by one? Because it would take considerable time, and I might facilitate matters. I know how to carry them without breaking. I be practiced upon my nephew, under his mother's eye. And there is no time to lose, you know."

"Why, the train doesn't go until

three-fifty," Janet cried.

"No, but you and I do—at least, we leave the kindergarten. I have some things to talk over with you."

"And there's Bim," Janet added, a

trifle wildly.

"Bim? Oh, yes!" With quick instinct he detected Bim, and tossed him a comradely smile. "But Bim, I can see, is wild to waken the echoes with that drum. Bim won't interfere. Janet," with a quick change of voice, "where did you find them all?"

Janet choked back a little gasp; she hadn't realized how hard she had been fighting to beat back the loneliness.

"It—it was Christmas," she faltered, "and I was all alone, with so many hours to wait—I had to do something. It has been fun—really, it has. There, now, I want you to meet Bim and his aunt—only I don't know her name,

and I'd like you to meet all these, but I don't know any of their names. Oh,

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ss. ered, don't, please!' The last exclamation was one of dismay, for one of the little brown women had darted forward, and was kissing her hand. Janet, flushed and confused, shrank back; it was the young man who somehow quieted things down, spoke a few words to the women, chatted gayly with the girl and Bim, and finally-just how he understood that it was to be done Janet never could remember-stood waving his hat to Bim as the child and the girl rolled away The girl's last remark in the taxi. was still ringing in Janet's ears.

"Say, it's been ripping—we ain't going to forget it—Bim nor I. And I'm real glad he came along. He's straight goods, all right—I can tell every

Janet looked very hard after the vanishing cab—so hard that she kept on looking after it had quite passed from sight. The young man looked at her and seemed well content with the prospect, which was not less charming when a soft color began to pervade it.

The tone was not in the least sentimental, but Janet began to talk hurriedly. "What do you suppose they are doing now at Broadmeadows? I did feel so badly to miss the ride this morn-

feel so badly to miss the ride this morning; but, after all, if I'd had that I should have missed Bim. One can ride any day, but I know there's only one Bim in the world. If you could have seen him choosing his musket—"

The young man interrupted without

The young man interrupted, without compunction. One might have supposed him not interested in Bim, but one would have supposed wrong.

one would have supposed wrong,
"Do you know," he remarked musingly, "it is very curious."
"What?" Janet asked unguardedly.

"What?" Janet asked unguardedly, "How carefully people conceal their talents. When I think of the hours of laborious argument you have spent trying to convince a certain student of sociology that you never could get in touch with 'people of that kind,' and then, when I consider this afternoon's procession, and the eminent success

with which you had established relations even with people with whom you could not speak——"

"It was the bananas," Janet explained hastily. "Eating is a universal language."

"So we think at the settlement. That you should have discovered it all by yourself, in a few minutes, reveals a remarkable gift for grasping first principles."

"Go right on—you needn't mind me."
The voice was small and meek—dangerously so, in fact; that was to hide the hurt in the brown eyes. The young man's yoice changed instantly.

"Janet," he cried, "Janet!"
"Oh!" the girl cried, turning from him with a small, homesick cry. "Oh, I thought you were never going to get over being stupid!"

An hour later, a young man and woman established themselves upon the Broadmeadows train. It was a desolate train, carrying only a couple of shabby and half-empty day coaches, but the two seemed wholly contented with their surroundings. Settlement workers and students of sociology should not, in all consistency, be critical. They seemed to have many things to discuss, but presently a silence fell upon them. The man was the first to break

"Janet!"

The girl turned an inquiring face. The voice had been abstracted.

"Janet, about that telegram business this morning—how did you expect yours to catch me when I told you I should leave at seven-twenty?"

The girl's face bloomed gloriously. She leaned forward, and gazed with interest at something in the passing landscape, but one dimple was still visible.

"That telegram?" she replied. "Rob, see that holly down in the swamp—isn't it glorious? Don't you suppose they'd stop the train for us to get some—being Christmas Day? What was I talking about? Oh, yes, the telegram. Did I—Oh, you dear, big, stupid boy, did I even say that I expected it to reach you?"





HAVE tried to write this story as a respectable, or derly piece of fiction, but it won't work. It labors under the disadvantage of possessing much verity and little verisimilitude: and,

from Aristotle's cow comparison on down, the critics are agreed that no reputable story can be built upon such a basis. It is likely to affect readers as his first sight of a camel did the New Jersey farmer. He spat, you remember, and declared: "Hell, there ain't no such animal."

The names of my camel's distinguishing humps were, or may be considered to have been, Albert Wilson

and Gus Magher.

When I first knew Wilson, he was engaged in losing two hundred and seventy-five dollars to a something less, or more, than man, that ran a gambling room in Dwelle, Idaho. Dwelle is a hamlet, of about one hundred inhabitants, on the stage road that runs from the old terminal of the Yellowstone Branch of the Oregon Short Line to the western gate of Yellowstone Park. Three years ago the railroad was extended up to the park; and Wilson had earned his two hundred and seventy-five dollars largely by contracting to cut timber on the right of way. Before becoming a contractor, he had been a day laborer on one of the grading gangs. Before that, he had been an unsuccessful magazine writer in New York, a student in Bowdoin University,

and the child of a Wall Street broker and a "stock" actress. His father shot himself, a few months before young Wilson's birth, after a disastrous night in a Forty-second Street gambling club; and his mother fatally ruptured a blood vessel, when her child was less than two months old, by overdoing the emotional part of her rather "heavy" rôle. Albert was taken up by a married brother of the broker, a very proper sort of life-insurance official. They managed to agree until the middle of the boy's fourth year in college.

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Gus Magher was the Dwelle gambler's name. He made up for lack of stature by the head and face of a superman-a true, big, blond beast's head, from Nietzsche's own country. His eyes were always half-closed, his clay-colored whiskers always about two days old. His big, heavy mouth was in the centre of his face; and his habitual expression bespoke contempt, and challenge, of everything. And yet there was a kind of soured intelligence and goodness about him, as if circumstances and his own villainous appearance had curdled the milk of human kindness in him. He was the sort of man a woman would despise, and a child, very conceivably, might like.

Albert Wilson was different. Four months of hard, clean work had brought lustre to his eyes, firmness to the outlines of his face, red and brown to his complexion. His nose was thin as an Indian's, and his eyebrows arched, as delicately as a girl's, above his sky-colored eyes. There was that about him which in women is called

charm and in men magnetism; but is really nothing more than the ancient mens sana in corpore sano. This was especially true on the first day, when he was playing merely to kill time. On the following morning, he expected to take the stage to Terminal; and then, ho for New York, and a renewed bucking of the magazine game!

Magher and Albert played steadily all one September afternoon; the familiar one card down, and then "Give me another," and "Another," with the small, persistent percentage in favor of the "banker." Wilson was fifty dollars ahead at one time. He played with the intuitive recklessness of the born gambler; and Magher, apparently, played fair, relying on that small, steady percentage. After supper, in an apparently casual way, they began to play again. Magher's face, by this time, had assumed a self-satisfied leer. Albert had caught the fever. Or perhaps the germs of it, inherited from that New York broker who shot himself in the Forty-second Street gambling club, had found the culture they required. When the game was called, shortly after midnight, Magher had seventy-five dollars of Albert's money.

"All gents step up to the bar," said Magher, "and have a drop of some-

thing on me."

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The gambling room was arranged, in conformity with most others in that country, by closing off the back part of a barroom. A lunch counter ran across the rear of the closed-off space. On one side was a modified sort of roulette wheel, and a high-banked table for shooting dice. On the other stood chairs and several plain wooden tables, across the top of one of which Albert had just passed his money. As the half dozen men, who had lingered around in expectation of the customary invitation, crowded into the barroom, the outer door of the saloon was thrown violently open, and a woman came in.

She wore a man's canvas jacket, and a man's soft felt hat was perched on the back of her head. But her skirt came to her ankles, in a respectable, feminine manner; and the redness of her full lips, as well as the life and color of her big gray eyes, offset the mannish shape of her hips and waist. She posed, with unconscious grace, just inside the door, her head thrown commandingly up, one hand on the doorknob, one thrust into the side pocket of her jacket.

"Jake," she called sharply to the bar-keeper, "why aren't you closed up?

You know it's after twelve o'clock."
"Just goin' to close," mumbled Jake, pretending to polish the bar with a corner of his apron. "'S'll right, Miss Prince."

"Just because the old man's away, don't you think you can break the laws, Jake!" she flung back. "You're not going to serve those men to-night! You men know you've got no business asking for drinks after midnight," she continued, turning her big, determined eyes on the crowd. "You can just clear out, now, and get your drinks in the morning!"

Magher was in front of the crowd. "All right, Miss Prince," he said.

"No offense, I hope."

But Albert took up her challenge. He was excited by the game, and by the few drinks that had passed around between hands. Excited, also, perhaps, by the scorn in the woman's eyes.

"Why, Miss White Ribbon," he drawled, "I think it would be downright unsociable, sending us away without letting us wet our whistles on Mr. Jake's bourbon. Why don't you join

us?

"You're new here, I see," she retorted. "I heard Gus was trimming If you'll listen to good advice, you'll take your handsome nose and eyebrows back to civilization.'

"Why, a perfect Amazon of a woman!" commented Albert delightedly. "A true Homeric woman-a Spartan damsel rejuvenescent! I take off my hat to you!" He swept the floor in a mock salute.

"Don't git gay," said Magher, turning on him with an ugly sneer. "Her

father owns the place.

"When you're through with Gus," put in the woman, "come around and I'll give you a job digging post holes for your board. I know your style." She turned her face away and sniffed. "Lock up the stuff, Jake," she com-manded. "And all you men get out."

Jake reluctantly did as he was ordered, and the men, grinning sheepishly, filed past her into the darkness. With a grunt of disgust, Albert followed them. As he passed her, standing stiff and scornful beside the door, some demon of perverseness prompted him to chuck her lightly under the

She was at him instantly, striking free-armed, like a man. Taken completely by surprise, he measured his length in the dusty road outside the door. His head struck the ground with a jarring thud, and he lay motionless, dazed, for perhaps three seconds. As he got slowly to his feet, the flaring gasoline lamp above the door showed his face very tense and white-and very sober.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said the woman, in a low, excited voice. She held out her hand to assist him to rise,

but he did not take it.

"You served me exactly right," he said, dusting himself uncertainly. "I thank you. I was a fool, and worse. I beg your pardon. I almost wish you'd killed me, though, instead of

doing-that! Good night!"

He bowed to her, with his eyes fastened on hers, while the men looked on curiously, as if in the presence of a matter they couldn't understand. The woman seemed to realize their existence only after Albert had crossed the road and disappeared into the "hotel."

"Lordy, but you did soak him!" commented Take, who had left his bottles to visit the scene of action. "I guess he got what was comin' to him, though!"

"Mind your own business!" she retorted shortly; and strode off toward

her father's cottage.

"She walks like a man," commented Magher, half to himself. "But really she ain't nothin' but a fool skirt, after

Three days passed. As the small,

persistent percentage asserted itself. Albert accelerated it by becoming more reckless and drinking more heavily. At eight o'clock on the evening of the fourth day, the two hundred and seven-

ty-five dollars had disappeared entirely.
"Stake me!" he said, with an awk-ward oath. "Stake me twenty dollars! You've won enough of my money

to stake me once, I guess."

Magher contemptuously staked him, In an hour's time the stake was renewed. Half an hour later, Albert owed him sixty dollars. Magher refused to advance any more chips.

"You've had more liquor'n you can carry," he explained. "It's like stealin' pennies offen a dead darky's eyes. Why don't you have another drink, and go to bed?"

Albert shuffled the cards with dull

determination.

"I'm aw-right," he said. "Let me have another twenty. Don't you think you'll get your dirty money?

Perhaps the fact that a Salt Lake preacher, bound out from the park, had stopped at the "hotel" that evening, was responsible for Magher's next

suggestion.

"Why don't you marry the lady across the street?" he asked. "She'd go into her old man's safe for you. That safe's about the only thing around here that 'd keep you staked.'

This, of course, was Albert's cue to throw the cards into the gambler's face. But his aim was poor, and Magher only laughed. The loafers, expectant of an invitation from the winner, laughed also.

"Well, I'll do it!" sputtered Albert, lurching to his feet. "I'll show you! I'll do it inside of half an hour! She'll be glad enough to get the chance to

marry me! You'll see!"

The men followed him to the door, watched him straggle down the street, and into the Prince cottage. Any account of the arguments he used there must, necessarily, be guesswork. wouldn't have listened to him in such a condition, gentle lady. Nor would I, if I were in your place. But Hannah Prince did. Possibly she determined to marry him to reform him, being, instinctively, better informed than the many learned detractors of this ancient custom. Possibly she was in love with him. At any rate, some fifteen minutes later, she accompanied him before the visiting parson. Acting for her absent father, who was notary public, hotelkeeper, postmaster, and owner of nine-tenths of the hamlet, she issued her own marriage license. The preacher seemed a bit troubled about the regularity of the proceedings. But Hannah Prince persuaded him to perform his office.

A clear, swift streamlet, which rose in the icy watershed of the continent some ten miles away, flowed under a log bridge near one end of the hamlet; and the first important act of Hamlah's married life was to make her husband jump into it, clothes and all. Albert had carried off the wedding with a drunken, blasé amusement and disdain. But as he scrambled, dripping and benumbed, up the rocky side of the stream and upon the bridge, he was unusually serious and sober.

"Feel more like a man?" asked his wife briefly. Neither she nor he seemed to notice that half the men in the place were standing a few feet

"Much better, thank you," he replied, trying in vain to keep his teeth from chattering. "But, for the second time, I'd about as leave you'd killed me!"

"Let's go home," said Hannah. She started to go, but the sight of Magher's big face stopped her.

"Oh, I almost forgot you," she said.
"It was sixty dollars my husband owed you, wasn't it?"

Magher looked at her quizzically. "I'm sorry you took that milksop," he said. "You deserve a man!"

"It was sixty dollars, wasn't it?" she persisted. As he continued to stare at her without answering, she drew a roll of bills from her pocket, and handed it to him.

"There it is," she said. "Count it."
"Your word's good," returned Magher, and put the roll in his pocket.

"Here, for God's sake!" interposed Albert. "I'll pay that—let him wait—don't you——"

"Wasn't that what you married me for?" she retorted, turning on him with exaggerated calmness. "Wasn't it?"

"I was drunk!" he groaned.

"Sick of your bargain already?" she asked quietly. "Well, you can go whenever you want to. I won't hold you to it."

"I didn't mean that, and you know I didn't!" he burst out. "I'll stand by all I've done! But since you've really paid that money, by God, I'll earn every cent of it digging post holes for you!"

"That's satisfactory," she returned. "Come on, now, or you'll get your death of cold."

He took his place at her side, and they walked rapidly over to her cottage. The moon was beginning to appear, big and limpid golden, across the thin air of the eastern ridges. Magher's wide nostrils expanded, sniffing the cool pine fragrance; and into his ugly face, which was turned toward the departing bridal couple and the rising moon, came such a poignancy of suffering as I have never seen.

"Well, Gus, you certainly made a strike," said some one behind him, snickering suggestively.

Magher's face changed with the rapidity of thought.

"Certainly did!" he called back.
"Come over to the shed, boys! Three rounds of the best in the house for

everybody, on me!"

Albert went to work on the post holes the next day; and Magher departed into the labyrinths of a notably thorough and prolonged spree. Albert was still pursuing his occupation, a week later, when Magher began to give up his more trying one. The gambler spent long hours of his return to sobriety sitting upon a butte, from which he could watch his erstwhile victim at work. He had developed even more than the usual taciturnity of an alcoholpoisoned man, and seldom spoke to or noticed any one. More ominous still,

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Albert, w you! ! She'll ance to

he door, e street, Any aced there k. You in such would at Hane deterhe gradually adopted the practically obsolete Western fashion of wearing a

revolver

Some one, who had nothing better to do, took pains to impress upon Albert the significance of these things. Some one else hinted that Magher had shown a fondness for Miss Prince before Albert's arrival, and had seemed sullen and depressed on the night of her marriage. Albert himself had no-ticed Magher squatting, like a sunsteeped buzzard, on the butte overlooking the line of post holes. All of these circumstances resulted in Albert's appearing for work, one fine morning, with a bright, new cartridge belt and a bright, new forty-four pistol attached to his waist. After this last display of incipient insanity, the hamlet began to prick up its ears for the sound of shooting.

It struck me as strange that Hannah should allow her husband to display his doubly dangerous artillery; and the fact that she did seemed to strengthen a curious report which had originated with her old colored servant. This report was to the effect that Hannah and her husband lived in different parts of the cottage, and never spoke or met except at meal times. They acted "polite as strangers," the old woman told the clerk at the "hotel," and she thought it was "scan'alous and a burnin' shame. the way they called each other 'Mister' and 'Misses.'" The regular evening group at the saloon discussed these circumstances without reaching any im-

portant conclusions.

At that time I was connected with one of the squads surveying for the new railroad, and my work frequently took me past Albert's lengthening line of post holes. I had little more than a nodding acquaintance with him; but one morning I ventured to criticise the unusual prominence of the gun.

"It's part of the game," he said, his handsome face lighting up with an apologetic smile. We talked for some time, and he told me about his ances-

try and previous occupations.
"I'm a born actor," he concluded. "I've played the scholar, gentleman,

hobo, and day laborer as chance assigned the rôles. Just now I'm starring in a beautiful melodrama. According to all precedents, Magher stacked the cards on me, and is the typical villain all through. By the same token, I'll probably have to kill him. But sometimes all signs fail. The uncertainty adds interest.

I ridiculed his notions, but provoked only good-natured banter in reply.

"I'm coming over this evening to ntinue that little game with Gus," he continue that little game with Gus, told me, as I left him. "And this time I'll keep my wits about me. I'm really anxious to discover whether he's jug-

gling the deck.'

When I entered the gambler's room, shortly after supper, I was conscious of an unusual atmosphere of constraint. Magher and Albert were playing. The dozen or so loafers were hardly making a pretense of being interested in anything but the game. Albert was playing carelessly, calmly, as usual. Magher was silent, and expressionless as a wooden man. Both players had removed their coats, and their revolvers were much in evidence. The whole situation was reminiscent of those little dugouts one sometimes comes across, in the woods near rock workers' camps. To a casual glance, they seem to contain so many innocent wooden boxes. Only a closer examination reveals the red-stamped "Dynamite," on the end of each box.

I sat down in a corner, and joined the loafers in make-believe gossip; but my real interest was with theirs, as they all knew. Once it seemed to me that Magher managed to glance at the index of a card before dealing it to Albert. The gambler was winning rapidly. Possibly he had tired of the certain, but slow, percentage. If this was the case, an explosion was only a matter of time. I meditated asking Albert over to my room, to look over some books we had spoken about. But there was every reason to believe he would refuse to go. The possibility of my relieving the tension by joining in the game presented itself. While I hesitated, the bartender called me into the

next room. He was red in the face with anxiety and disgust.

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"Ain't there no way to stop that?" he asked, in a querulous undertone. "I never seen Gus look so ugly before. And that damn young fool came blowin' in here like an imitashun bad man, just itchin' for trouble!"

I mendaciously replied that I didn't think there would be any trouble.

"Don't you?" he replied, in a tone that showed he discounted my remark as it deserved. "Well, maybe not. But won't you just watch this bar a minute? I'm goin' to get Miss Prince! She'll stop 'em if anybody can!"

Without waiting for a reply, he tucked up his apron, tiptoed around the end of the bar, and slipped out of the door. As the white cloth glimmered through the panes of the front window, I heard a chair pushed violently back on the other side of the thin partition. Albert spoke:

"Gus, you looked at that card. Kindly give me one you haven't seen!"

I stepped to the entrance of the gambling room. Albert's back was toward me. He was sitting with his chair tipped far backward and his hands on his hips.

"I did not look at that card," said Magher deliberately. He laid the deck on the table, and pushed back his chair. Several loafers, who had been sitting behind him, rapidly changed their loca-

"Oh, yes, you did," insisted Albert nonchalantly. "I saw you. I've been watching you this evening. You've looked three times. But that last time was a trifle too raw. If you've got to cheat, you might, at least, pay me the compliment of cheating so that a blind man couldn't see you! Any fool could have caught you that last time!"

Magher eyed him silently, expectant-

"Don't you hear me?" sneered Wilson, raising his voice. "I say you're a cheat, a dirty scoundrel, a thief, a liar, a coward, a skunk—"

"You're a liar," interrupted Magher, with a deliberate motion toward his hip. "A dirty, sorehead liar."

Everybody recognized the climax, and ducked or took hold of something according to his nature. Albert shot first, but Magher shot best. The boy went sprawling back on the floor, with a big hole clean through his right shoulder.

Magher was on his feet, as soon as he had shot, and leveled his revolver as if to shoot again. I believe I shrieked something at him. He changed the direction of the weapon until I found myself staring into a small, black hole, rimmed by a shining ring. If I didn't duck, it was because I hadn't sufficient command of myself. He grinned at me contemptuously, and toyed with his revolver, looking down into Albert's staring eyes and white face. I fell back against the door jamb, sick with fear and the realization of my own cowardice. At the same time, I conceived, with a feeling of thankfulness, the belief that Magher would not shoot again; that he was disgusted with the whole business, and sorry for what he had done.

There was a sound of footsteps back in the saloon, and into my disordered faculties was borne the realization that Hannah Wilson had rushed to the doorway beside me. She was panting violently. The black, double barrels of a shotgun projected from her shoulder in the direction of Magher.

"Drop—that gun—Gus!" she gasped.
Magher smiled. Something almost
like an expression of relief came over
his brute's face. Looking her squarely
in the eyes, he lowered his revolver's
muzzle so that it covered Albert.

"I'll kill you—I'll kill you!" she shrieked.

"Well, why don't you?" he asked, still smiling.

"I'll do it-oh, God, help me!" she

"All right," said Magher, his face growing bitter and drawn. "Better hurry up! When I count three, I'm going to shoot your husband! One! Two!—"

The flash and roar of the big gun smothered everything. When my eyes found Magher again, he was lying, with his arms thrown straight out on either side of him, in the middle of the floor. His breast was a sight to behold—she must have fired both barrels at once—but his face was remarkably calm.

Hannah was already on her knees beside Albert. I helped her cut away his shirt. It was a clean wound, and the slight flow of blood indicated that the big shoulder artery had not been

"What a corking dénouement!" he said, looking up into his wife's face. "I was just wondering how this would bring us together!"

Suddenly he caught one of her hands with his left hand, and pressed it to

his lips.

"You can't say that you did that on account of our bargain!" he murmured, "Oh, you Doric woman! What a corking dénouement!"

We bound him up as well as we could, and summoned a doctor and coroner. They arrived three and five days later, respectively. The doctor collected his fee, and took the first stage back. The coroner, who was a peculiarly practical man even for a coroner, spent half a day in gathering evidence, and decided to save the State the expense of a useless trial by ordering a verdict of suicide. Taking all the circumstances into account, I believe he was not only justified, but literally correct.

Wilson, at the point where my information ceases, was editing a newspaper in Pocatello. His wife, I learn from the same report, was an enterprising suffragette. From which it is to be presumed that she had got her husband to the point where she didn't have to devote all her time to keeping

him straight.

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## THE LIMPING ONE

YOU had no eyes for me, my lad, I never met your sight When fiddles played upon the green Or girls walked out at night.

The laughing girls, the dancing girls, The rosy cheeks for you; You knew the black eyes' challenging, The softness of the blue.

You had your pick and choice of girls, 'What call had you to face' The little, limping one who sat Beside the chimney place?

Oh, girls enough they cried for you
The day you said good-by,
And yet I'm thinking there's just one
Whose tears will never dry.

And girls enough wished well to you
The hour you turned away,
And yet I'm thinking just one prayer
Goes with you every day.

And if at last it aids you, lad,
You'll never guess it came
From just the little, limping one
You never called by name.
THEODOSIA GARRISON.





ILLY PRESTON'S early arrival at the home of Cornelia Halsey, one evening, was not incidental. It had been carefully planned; for Billy had heard over the telephone that some peo-

ple were coming in for bridge later in the evening, and he wanted to have a few preliminary words with Cornelia before they got there. That early arrival and those few preliminary words were a formula that he had been using longer than he liked to remember, and although Cornelia would never have acknowledged it, she would have missed them tremendously had either of them by chance been omitted.

And yet, though Billy might just have come back from Siberia or China, or India or Australia, and made haste to follow this long-time habit, the result was not commensurate with his efforts. He might as well never have made the visit or repeated the words. Their subject matter always presented the same general theme—the sublime, supreme advantage to be secured to both Cornelia and himself if she would consent to marry him. He had never quite convinced her of this, but he always hoped to.

Just now, as she greeted him with the lifted eyebrows of surprise, which seemed to question his impulses as if she had never suspected him of being capable of them, she stood with her back to one of the card tables, her hands behind her, pressed palm downward on the smooth surface of the polished wood, her eyes fixed speculatively upon him, and her sweet mouth curved in a half-amused, half-indulgent smile. He had interrupted her as she was arranging the cards and the scores, but instantly he realized that somehow she seemed more than ever remote, wrapped in those seven veils of the mystery of feminine charm and suggested withdrawal of self which were more than ever baffling, and which put spurs to his masculine combativeness and desire for dominance. She seemed for some undivined reason to be standing on austere, ethical heights, denying ordinary human approach such as he might compass.
"Well, Billy,"

"Well, Billy," she said, speaking down from her distance; "what has brought you?"

"The same old thing, the same old story, the same old question, but"—Billy's face paled slightly even through the brown tan on it, and his eyes gleamed with a tender light—"not the same old answer, is it, Nell?"

Ordinarily, his use of the name "Nell" would have touched her. She liked to have him call her "Nell." Her father hailed her jovially as "Cornie"; her mother lengthened this sedately and dignifiedly into "Cornelia," giving each syllable its full value; but Billy Preston's name for her was "Nell." It hinted suggestively and pleasantly of romance; of another "Nell," who, if "a frail young sprite," had made history by her beauty and personality, and had played the game of life with high emprise and a reckless dash; for Cornelia was not a true product of her city looking on its presentations and phe-

nomena with the cold and cynical eyes of custom and habit, but she possessed decided inclinations toward chivalry, and romance, and hero worship which education and sophistication had not stifled or completely committed to destruction, but which she had long agreed Billy could not personally illustrate. Although she had not seen him for more than six months, a frown swept across her face at his words, and wearily, half-perplexedly, almost indignantly, she said:

"Do you know, Billy, that if you would employ one-half the persistence in doing something real that you do in —bothering me, you would win out in life, and get everything that you want."

"That's what I'm after"—Billy's smile was descriptive of the purposeful state of his mind—"to get what I want; but, you see, I go the other way about it. The 'things worth while' will just happen of themselves if I get you; and I'll have all that I ask in

life, then."

Billy was standing by an overfed, puffy-looking armchair, with his elbows resting on the back of it, and his whimsical smile and almost boyish attitude of begging her consideration brought out all of his best points. He showed race and breeding in his broad shoulders, his tall, well-kept body, his shining hair, and thin nostrils, that quivered slightly now with his indrawn breath; but, more than all else, in his somewhat impassive face, that locked its own secrets, in the gray eyes that looked black when he was moved by anger or stirred by emotion, as he was now; and Cornelia, impelled by that emotion to look more closely at him, wondered vaguely, half questioningly, if she had ever read that face, or, indeed, knew Billy Preston, the real Billy Preston, at all.

"Why, Nell"—he took a step or two forward and stood beside her, looking down at her, a slender thing, all flame and flashing spirit, with her red hair and inimitable grace—"all of the inscriptions on *Portia's* caskets are compassed in you. 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.' I know

that to my sorrow. 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.' Surely, you will admit that if six years of service for you will give you to me I deserve you." Then Billy leaned down and took her hand, and held it closely. "'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' That you know I do every time that I ask you. Can I have my answer?" The voice shook slightly, although the words almost commanded. There was something dominant, imperious, in the tones that appealed to Nell as Billy never had before; as if, indeed, he were giving and hazarding all that he had.

Cornelia's eyelids fell. She had lost that buoyant patronage of manner with which she had at first greeted him, and Billy's eyes, demanding their answer, seemed to reach the very heart of her, trying, as he always had, since the first time that he had seen her, to find the secret of her charm, her fascination for

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She was not exactly beautiful, but she was the very essence and spirit of grace, with her slender figure, crowned with its red hair, and the brown eyes that were always changing color. Sometimes, as now, a light topazbrown, and again inscrutable, shadowed by the lashes which she seemed to draw over them as a curtain against intrusion of thought, while beneath the right eye was a long white scar that seemed more than anything else to announce Billy's claim to her regard. He recalled, with a tender heart and sympathetic thought, the day that it had found its mark there, when he had come upon her, standing dazedly by the roadside near her father's country home, making feeble efforts to stanch the blood that was flowing from the open cut on her cheek. Her horse had been frightened by a swiftly passing automobile, and had thrown her. She was only seventeen, then, and Billy had put her on her horse, bound up the cut, and led her home, most of the time holding her in the saddle. He remembered now how plucky she had been, and Cornelia, as if catching his thought, slipped her hand hesitatingly

across the table toward him, and lifted

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her eyes, with a sort of appeal in them.
"I can't, Billy," she almost whispered. "I am afraid—I don't know what I am afraid of-life, perhaps. I am fond of you," she added hastily. "But-I am sure that I do not love you. You are not at all the kind of man I have always intended to marry." Cornelia had caught her voice again, and was once more Cornelia, sure of herself. "I could not marry you against my reason and judgment, Billy. Look at the matter frankly; consider the subject. What have you and I to offer each other in the way of the real things?"

"Hang the real things!" muttered Billy irritably. "What do you mean by the real things, anyhow?" he questioned sharply, as she sank into a chair, prepared to argue the subject, and motioned him to do the same. Indeed, it seemed to the man watching her that her eyes were hard, and that even her hair, which he had always known as a warm chestnut brown, looked argumen-

tatively red now.

"Well, self-abnegation, and all that it implies. You and I are no longer eighteen and twenty years old; we are older, and modern, products of our time, with strong wills that won't brook control, and, we are selfish, I suppose -most people are-and we have been brought up to believe that our little wishes are paramount, since I am an only daughter and you are an only son. You have never done a stroke of work in your life, at least, in the six years that I have known you; and since you have left college you have turned the management of your father's estate over to an agent, that you may have more time to play; and, for an interest in life"-her lip curled-"you-play polo."

Billy, sitting opposite her, if angry, was cool and impassive in appearance, master of himself as he studied her, his hands folded loosely between his knees, his eyes, those gray eyes, now almost black, searching her, getting down to the heart of her feelings, her motives.

"I"-a cynical smile flitted across

her lips-"I-my spirit balks at the homespuns of existence, the things they tell us real companionship is founded upon. I know how to carry clothes, you'll acknowledge that." She looked up at him from under her brows, provocatively, whimsically, as she displayed the soft green chiffon, with the mar-velous insets of lace, light and airy as a dream of elusive, fleeting spring, "And I do the that she was wearing. things well, or indifferently, that every one else does; and, for an interest in life, I-play bridge." She dropped back in her chair and smiled at him, with her eves half closed; then she added wearily, as she sighed: "Each of us has a pet game that we play straight, that we cultivate, and at which we never cheat; but, that bigger game, the biggest game there is, the game of life"-she spread out her hands descriptively—"we don't know anything about it. We don't even know the initial moves, and we cheat at it-cheat ourselves.'

Billy smiled superiorly: "In every game, Nell, one has to have a partner to play at all; and you'll never learn any game unless you practice constantly. And, what's the use of taking some one else's theories in regard to life, and how it should be lived? Why could not you and I start out as pioneers on our own road-the road to to-morrow, and travel on it our own wayyours and mine, and do it well? Perhaps we'd make some mistakes, but I think we'd come through in a good way." Billy's voice was persuasively

rich in feeling.

Cornelia's eyes gleamed a moment; she pondered, and then she shook her head. "If I married you, we'd get to quarreling about the flower-lined bypaths, and we would not have gone any distance before we'd be looking around for stones to throw at each other, to add emphasis to arguments.'

Cornelia's light laugh irritated Billy. His mouth tightened slightly, and he rose and walked up and down the room for a moment or two. Nell felt that she had never known before how good he was to look at; then he came back

and stood beside her, lifting his head with an upward fling, as if throwing

off her words.

"I think you are taking a great deal for granted," he said gravely. "I certainly would not undertake any responsibilities unless I felt all that they implied in demand upon me, and, in any game, Nell, I always play fair."

Cornelia could not help being impressed by a certain dignity and re-

serve in Billy's tones.

"I'll tell you what I mean"-she sat forward now, all alive with her graceful, illustrative gestures-"I standing at the corner of one of the cross streets this morning, waiting to go from one side of the Avenue to the other, when I heard shouts and calls, and realized that a pair of runaway horses were bearing down on me. Broken bits of harness clung to them, the shattered pole of a vehicle from which they had evidently kicked themselves free was trailing at their heels, and tangled in the reins and bounding along the asphalt was the body of their driver, who managed to free himself just as they reached where I was standing. Somehow, they threaded that maze of people and vehicles safely, and flashed on, like a message of death. But, halfway up the block, was the traffic guard, and as he spied them, dashing across the Avenue, he put spurs to his mount and was after them like the wind. He caught up with them before they had reached the next avenue, and, racing along with them, leaned down at his opportunity, and seized the horse nearest him, intending, of course, to draw them up gradually, but"-Nell had risen in her excitement of recalling the scene, and the color was coming and going in her cheeks, but the scar beneath the glow in her eyes, made thus more vivid, was all that Billy could see as he watched her—"but"—she made a hopeless little gesture—"they resisted, swerved, slipped, fell, and all went down, a struggling mass.'

Billy grunted comprehendingly, "A regular mix-up. I've been in them on the polo field, and they're no fun."

"But you don't seem to see the significance of the man's act. How great, how brave it was for him to hazard his life in that way! It was valor. And he was not doing it in the interest of sport, but he was guarding human life, saving property, doing something worth while. Why, I almost wept over his hand when I tried to grasp it and thank him for his bravery."

"You? How did you get there?" Billy questioned in surprise, disgusted reproof; that masculine reproof which smacks of the Orient and secluded

women

"I? I had been swept forward by the surging crowd." There was a glorified enthusiasm reflected in her face.

Billy grinned as he stared comprehensively at her. "Oh, I am not belittling the act; but you mustn't forget that it's all in the day's work to him."

"That's just what I mean," she flashed back. "And his day's work means something. Ours does not."

Billy laughed outright. "You're not disillusioned with life, Nell"—it was his turn to be patronizing now—"but with your attitude toward it. You need some one to direct you—me, for instance; and, one star differeth from another in glory. I am not called to do the policeman's work, nor he mine."

"And you couldn't, if you were," she said: "What sort of a move does polo give you in the game of life, compared

to his?"

Billy stared at her for a minute or two, laughed a trifle shortly, and then threw back his head and gazed at the ceiling, whistling softly. Then he came back to Nell and the contemplation of her point of view, as he said;

"Just as good as his, just as good as his, if I play fair. I learn as much from my game as he does from his, in the real essentials; and so can you from bridge. Life is purely a matter of relative values. The moves in any game are merely the symbols of them all. They bear the same relative value to each other. Really master one, and you have got at the principle of them all—life included."

Billy's thought was interrupted by the obstinate smile of denial that settled around the corners of Nell's mouth, and a touch of whimsical wistfulness crept about his own, while the hint of fidelity which was always in his eyes when he looked at her deepened al-

most to shadow.

There had never been a moment, it seemed to him, since that scar had first marked itself on her cheek, when he had not dreamed of the time when she would lay her sweet hand in his and trust to him to guide and care for her. He liked her spirit, that flame of life which seemed to sweep her into eager activities and to call forth from her that restless desire to touch the heights of emotion and being, to help her ignore the depths, to urge her to a freedom of the spirit with a contempt for the steps by which it must always be gained. He knew all this about her, and he did not laugh at her theories; they touched him deeply, expressing, as they did, the pathos of youth's helplessness and lack of understanding; but lately he had noticed a hardness, a disillusionment, a multiplicity of theories in her that were forming an erraticism he deplored, because he realized the best of which she was really capable, even better than she did herself. Plain of thought, sensible, and clear-sighted, if commonplace, as Nell deemed him, he also had his own theories and opinions formed on experience, and his reserves, which even Nell could not penetrate or influence.

"I still contend that the man counts for more than you; so does any man who is of service to his community,"

Cornelia insisted.

Billy turned away in half disgust, while Cornelia, going forward to greet some people who had just come into the room, left him to wander aimlessly about for a while and then to sit in a corner and watch her, with a moody frown, until the rest had gathered for the game. He had come to tell her an important piece of information this evening, and she had taken up the time with a discussion of a story of the street. He realized that the epic ap-

pealed to her, all flame and fire and love of romance and deeds of prowess as she was, and that the commonplace, the everyday, which he illustrated, fretted her. He understood her heroics, if he did hate them, and he had really wanted to talk to her. Well, he might have a chance after the game, and these people were gone; and there was one satisfaction in the fact that he was to play at the same table with her at bridge. But this did not turn out fortunately, as he had hoped, for either he felt Nell's dissatisfaction with him, or his own disappointment held his spirits in check, for up to a certain point the game was most humdrum.

Now, Cornelia played bridge as she did most things-well, but not with finished skill, because she trusted, not to her reason and judgment, as she supposed she did, but to her intuitions, and made her moves with a reckless dash that passed for skill, and deceived most people into believing that it was; but she was so abundantly well pleased with the result of her efforts that it would have been a daring person who would have criticised her. To-night, however, during one hand, as chance would have it, Billy was in the mood to protest. It happened that they were pitted against each other; Cornelia dealer, with Billy leader, in the rubber game, with the score game all, and love all. Holding ace, king, queen, knave, eight, four, three of clubs; ace, king, knave, five of hearts; six, three of diamonds; and no spades, Cornelia made it no-trumps.

Billy held king, nine, eight, seven, five, four of spades; nine, five, two of diamonds; ten, seven, six, four of hearts, and he led the seven of spades. The dummy went down with the ace, queen, six, two of spades; queen, knave, seven, four of diamonds; seven, six, five, two of clubs, and the queen of hearts. Third hand held knave, ten, three of spades; ace, king, ten, eight of diamonds; nine, eight, three, two of hearts; and ten, nine of clubs. To the lead of the seven of spades, Cornelia from the dummy played the queen, and proceeded to make a grand

slam, winning the game and the rubber. She turned to Billy, flushed with triumph; but something in his face dampened her enthusiasm. He shook his head, as he turned over the cards.

"You did it, I know; but it was not good bridge. It was a regular gam-

ble, Nell."

"What are you talking about?" She turned to him, surprise riding high in her expression, and a lofty scorn for his criticism; but Billy stoutly maintained his position, and shook his head.

After every one else had gone home, Billy, lingering, sat at the card table, replacing the cards as he remembered they had fallen. "Nell," he called, as he heard the footsteps of the last guest die away, "come here. I want to show you something about that hand you played. You had no business to make a finesse with the queen. You were taking great risks. You were entitled to a little slam—that's all."

"I made a grand slam," Cornelia asserted imperiously; "there is nothing more to say. The hand speaks for itself, and the wisdom of taking risks."

"Why, certainly," Billy conceded, "if you gamble, but I thought you were playing bridge. It was the merest chance that you did not run against the king third hand, and there was every warrant that you should. You wouldn't even then have had your little slam, and it was not fair to your partner. You were risking his game, as well as your own. You should have played the ace of spades, second hand."

Billy was brought to a realizing sense suddenly of the folly of his utterances by an acute fall in the temperature of Cornelia's manner. "I don't care to discuss the game," she replied. "And—you have distinctly offended me this evening," she added haughtily.

"How? Why?" he asked, in surprise, as he rose from the table.

"You were exceedingly stupid," she said, with a touch of asperity, deeming Billy's need of careful explanations a hardship. "You seemed to laugh at and belittle what was to me such a noble, such a splendid, deed—a deed of valor—"

"Why, I didn't do anything of the kind," protested Billy, "but I had seen all about it in the evening paper, and I wanted to talk about other things."

"And I wanted to talk about that, and you would not even feign an interest. You can talk for hours about polo, but something real—worth while—the larger interests of life—"

Billy's face hardened and stiffened, with an expression that Cornelia did not know; she felt as a tree might when a sudden storm sweeps down upon it, tearing its poor little leaf protection from it in a whirlwind of fury. This was a new Billy, one she had never seen before. He seemed to grow taller; to lift his head and throw back

his shoulders:

"I came to talk to you to-night about 'the larger interests' "—his voice was as cold and hard as steel when a blow falls on it-"and I haven't had a chance. I am going to Arizona to look after the development of some mines for mother and myself that for some time I have been contemplating and arranging for, and-I-wanted you to go with me, if you could do so commonplace a thing as marry me. There is nothing heroic about it, but it is a move in the game of life." Billy's eves gleamed, but they had lost their sympathetic gentleness; they were as hard as his voice. "But I think that I prefer to go alone, now. I am tired of fencing, of playing, with a real issue, which, after all, is only a gamble to you, and"-there was a suggestion of the sardonic in Billy's words and expression—"by the way, it may interest you to know that I used to go to school with your man of valor up in Connecticut. And that I was in that crowd, also, to-day. He is a good fellow, all right, but he told me afterward that he did not go down with the horses, but freed himself by a jump that I had showed him, one that I had learned at polo."

There was nothing dramatic in Billy's exit. He went very quietly, turning and making his way out of the house as he said the last words; but he left Cornelia crushed. The skies had fallen, and they had fallen on her. The storm, swift and sudden, had bowed her and stripped her of all of her theoretical and selfish leaves by its

unexpected fury.

If Billy did indeed go to Arizona, she knew nothing of it. Heretofore, he had always written her, and she had been able pretty accurately to keep track of his movements; but all through the long summer that followed, she had no word from him, and, wondering about him, longing to see him walk in upon her, in his old, accustomed way, constantly expecting him, she grew thin and pale, but she carried herself outwardly with a high She would not acknowledge, spirit. even to herself, that she missed that ever-present thought she had held so long of Billy's protecting love and interest in her.

But because he was always in her mind, perhaps, she began to hear things about him that she had never known before: of how he had jumped into New Haven Bay to save the life of a fellow student, during a yachting accident, at imminent risk of his own; of his generosity to two young cousins whom he was educating and sending through college; of his own close studies and travels and inspections of mining properties, that he might better understand the development of some belonging to his mother; and of his goodness and chivalrous regard for his mother; of his sportsmanlike conduct and prowess on the polo field. She had, indeed, never known Billy—the real Billy.

One autumn day, however, when, for a week, the sunshine seemed to have left the world, Cornelia saw in the social notes in the morning news that Billy's mother was back in town for the winter. Her heart began to sing. Surely, Billy was back, too; back with her; and if he were—oh, if he were!—then, spring had come again. It were no longer gray autumn, wrapped in

mists and veils, and picturing brooding, sullen skies, but bright, gay, colorful, enchanting spring; and she was walking down the Avenue with Billy, counting the cross streets toward the west, those cross streets, all aglow in the evening, to lead "the eyes toward sunset skies, beyond the hills where green trees grow."

She put her paper aside and went and stood at the long mirror between the windows, and gazed at herself seriously, meditatively; then she shook her finger at the reflection of herself in

stern reproof.

"Oh, you cheat—you horrid cheat! You pretended that you did not know the moves in the game of life. You know every one of them, and you gambled, just as you did at bridge. You pretended that you did not love Billy, and you knew that you did. You did not play fair and—Billy did. It's your turn to lead, now. Go and do it." She turned and sought the telephone.

She turned and sought the telephone. Calling up Billy's mother's house, she asked if he were at home. He was. Would he come to the telephone to receive a message? If Billy could only have seen the expression on her face and the soft sweetness of her eyes!

"I just called," she said half shyly, and her voice was a trifle faint over the wire, "to tell you that I am going down to have a cup of tea with your mother this afternoon, and—if you would like to drop in before I leave-Perhaps, it may be too dark then for me to come home alone. What? You are coming up this morning? Of course I will be glad." The voice was strong now and there was a thrill of delight in the tones. "I am always glad to see you, and, Billy-it's been awfully lonely, not seeing you this summer; and-you were right about my gamble with that game. I had no business to gamble for a grand slam; another time-again-I would be content with-just what you say belongs to



## THE PEARLS OF MIRAFLORES





HEN the mail orderly brought the letter to my quarters in Manila, and I saw that it was signed by one Jeronimo de Torrenegro, the name meant nothing to me. But as I read, the memo-

ries came with a rush that almost overwhelmed me.

"Chombo" was the name by which Don Jeronimo de Torrenegro had been known in certain days, now so long ago that I no longer care to count the years, when he and I had been chums in boarding school. Chombo was the son of an old Spanish family, whose father had sent him to school in the United States in order that he might learn English-which he did, together with sundry other things, undoubtedly less desirable in the eyes of his worthy parent. Now Chombo, like myself, was a man hurrying toward the twilight of life. He was a widower, it seemed, the head of his family, and the owner of those Philippine estates of which he had told me when we were boys; when, in spite of our geography lessons, the Philippines were to me only some islands, vaguely situated somewhere in the broad Pacific, where cocoanuts, monkeys, Malay pirates, and other romantic things were to be found. And Chombo had written, asking me to go to him, for the sake of old times, and because he was lonely. Also, he mentioned that he had a surprise waiting for me there at his house on the Hacienda Miraflores.

At any time this letter would have

affected me, even though I might not seriously have considered accepting the invitation. Now its effect was multiplied greatly, for I, too, was lonely.

Redfield, older than I, but my closest

friend, had been retired from the service with the rank of major general over two years before, just after the close of the Chinese campaign. Since that time I had heard little of or from him, and seen nothing at all. Philly, his granddaughter, whom I had known from her babyhood, and loved almost as did Redfield himself, wrote to me now and then, and notwithstanding the Philippine postal arrangements, which then were worse, if possible, than they are now, some of her letters, after following me about from place to place, finally found me. But Philly herself I had not seen since she was newly married to Tommy Pendale, a lieutenant in her grandfather's old regiment. That was when she was seventeen, and she now was nearly at her majority. At the time when Chombo's letter reached me, I did not even know where they were stationed, and it might be years more before I saw her again.

I had no need to remain in the service; no need for the retired pay which five more years would bring me. My fortune, which had come to me without exertion on my part, greatly exceeded my needs, and was only piling up to exceed them still more. And now this letter, which seemed to have come straight from my long-past boyhood, brought with it a flood of weariness; weariness and disgust of the life which for so many years I had led. For what, after all, was an army quartermaster

more than a glorified man-of-all-work? And what more than an ass was a person who stayed in that department long enough to attain the rank of colonel, as I had? The answer to both questions, in my mind, was "nothing." Then and there I resolved that neither of the epithets contained in those questions should apply to me one moment longer than I could help. I determined to re-

It was General Orde, the department commander himself, who finally upset my resolve. He asked me to dinner, and not only remonstrated, but flattered me as well by many references, made with every appearance of sincerity, as to how irreparable, as things then were going, would be my loss to the service. I am by no means impervious to flattery. Neither is any other man. At any rate, the upshot of it was that I agreed not to resign, at least not then, but instead to take a long leave, such as I had not had in years, to think it over.

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After this matter was settled, however, his next remarks would, had my word not been passed, have confirmed the intention which I had held when I went to his quarters. He asked me the name of the schoolboy friend whom I intended visiting, and I told him.

"Jeronimo de Torrenegro," he repeated musingly. "Jeronimo de Torrenegro. Somehow, the name's familiar, and yet I can't place it. Where does he live?"

"I don't know, sir," I replied. "He didn't say, in his letter to me. told me to write him at Tayung, wherever that may be, and the letter would get to him; also, that a transport touches there occasionally, and that if I'd take it, he'd have his private boat waiting there for me. I suppose his estates must be on some little island where there isn't any regular communication with the outside world."

General Orde laid down his cigar, and looked up with renewed interest. "Doubtless you're right," said he. "In fact, I'm sure of it. I know where Tayung is, and when you mentioned it I identified your friend. He's the Spaniard they told me of, who's sort of a little king, and has made such a pile of money that they say he hasn't time to count it. Pearls or piracy, the report said, but I doubt the latter, since he's asked an officer of the United States Army there to visit him. He's none too well affected toward our government, I understand, yet he tries to keep the people there quiet, and has a hard time doing it. Tayung is onethe largest-of that bunch of dots you'll see on any map sprinkled around the southern end of the archipelago. I'm going to post some men there-ought to have done it long before, but couldn't spare 'em until now. But I sent down and located the site for a post. The first transport leaves to-morrow afternoon; the next in a fortnight. You can hardly be ready to go by the first, but you can send your letter by her, and follow it in a couple of weeks. glad you're going to that part of the world, Drake," he added, after a little use. "Very glad, indeed."
"Glad, sir? May I ask why?" I inpause.

quired in some surprise.

"Surely. I was going to tell you," he answered thoughtfully. "It's because I know you're to be trusted, and because you're a friend of Redfield's, who is down somewhere in that country." "Redfield - there!" I exclaimed.

"What on earth could have taken him there? And what's he doing?"

"That I don't know," he replied thoughtfully. "If one believed half the rumors that have been coming here to me, one would think that he was trying to start an insurrection against the United States. Oh, I know-we all know-how absurd any such notion is," he went on, holding up his hand to stop the ejaculation of horrified denial that was on my lips. "Still, you know what Redfield is. Any one can fool him, when it comes to most matters outside of his profession. That's been demonstrated time and again."

"I know he's unsuspecting," said I, not to be restrained any longer. "But no living being nor combination of events could shake his loyalty to the nation he served for forty-two years."

"Of course, no one could swerve him where any question of honor was involved. I never dreamed they could," rejoined General Orde impatiently. "It's a question of facts that he's likely to be deceived in. That's where he can be fooled. The natives down in that part of the world are of a different breed of Malay from those we have up These are bad enough, but the devil himself-who undoubtedly was their master until they got beyond his teaching—would be taken in by those others. So, what chance has a simple old soldier like Redfield? My experience has taught me, colonel, that where there's so much smoke there invariably is the fire that caused it. It may not be where the smoke indicates, but it's there somewhere, nevertheless. Heaven only knows what Redfield may have been led into doing. But I'm his friend -every one who knows him is, I think, from the President down-and none of us wishes to see him get into any trouble. So hunt him up, Drake, and do what you can to straighten things out. For I'm almost sure they'll require straightening. And if you need any assistance, I can assure you that a word from you, sent to me, will have the force of a command, if it takes a brigade.'

By most people our department commander was supposed utterly to lack anything like human sympathy. I was deeply impressed both by the fact that in this instance he had so far forgotten himself as to show so much of it, and, also a supposition on my part, which amounted almost to a certainty, that he knew, or at least suspected, far more than he had chosen to tell me. I hurried away from his house, and, writing a word to Chombo, dispatched it that very night to the outgoing steamer. Then I made my arrangements, and that day fortnight found me, very miserable, indeed, tossing about in a rickety little inter-island transport, which wallowed through the tail end of a ty-

My companions in misery, some of whom had seen Tayung before, searched their very souls for words which would express their opinions of that place. All of their efforts were most sincere; in some cases the talent for profanity amounted to absolute genius. Yet, when early one morning we came to a stop, with a tremendous rattling of cable through hawse pipes. not far from the land, I realized how ineffective, after all, language sometimes is. I felt most sorry, when the unlovely mud beach sent its varied stenches, against the wind, out to the steamer, for those who had to stay there, even though their camp would be on the high land of the interior. But at the same time I rejoiced exceedingly that I would not have to set foot upon it.

A prao, of piratical appearance, whose like I never before had seen, was lying close by. She launched a boat, the looks of which proclaimed it a true offspring of the parent craft. This boat, paddled—not rowed—by an appropriate crew of ruffians, each wearing an interesting assortment of wooden-scabbarded knives stuck into his gay sash, came up to our side ladder, and, after delivering a note from Chombo, the men set about transferring my bag-

gage

It soon was done. Undoubtedly they were Chombo's men; therefore, I had nothing to fear, I told myself, and didn't in the least mind their piratical looks. But all the same, I got out a holster containing a second automatic pistol, and slipped it on my belt to balance the first, before giving up the bag which had contained it and following that bag over the side.

My precautions seemed entirely unnecessary. Royalty itself could not have been treated with greater deference and consideration than was I. When we got up our wooden anchor and skimmed away over a smooth sea at the speed which only a prao, of all things propelled by sails, is capable, I felt that I had reached a land which, despite my long residence in the northern islands, was wholly strange to me.

Night came, and found us still skimming as a swallow skims through air. A full moon, brighter than any I ever before had seen, rose and hung over us, silvering the shores of the myriad little islands through which we threaded our way. It was all very beautiful. With one of my bags for a pillow, I lay down on the small after deck, where there was a sort of thatched shelter, in order to admire it while more at ease. But I fancy I must have dozed.

I was roused by fingers snapping close to my face, and, opening my eyes, saw that the chief pirate was apparently trying, in dumb show, to convey to me the fact that our journey was nearly at its end. I struggled drowsily to my

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Directly ahead of us, and a short half mile away, two points of land, extending toward each other, narrowed the mouth of what evidently was a harbor. On each of these points stood a palmshaded house, the outlines of which reminded me, vaguely, of the days when I was stationed in New Mexico, near the border. These things I took in at a glance; I had no time for more. My piratical friend made it plain that the fact of our having nearly reached our destination was not the one which he wished to emphasize.

He talked to me severely in some Malay dialect, of which I naturally understood no word. At the same time, his gestures became almost frantic. Stooping, he patted the floor boards invitingly, then rose to his full height again, and, sweeping both arms along the length of our boat, ended by pointing over the side a finger that trembled in its earnestness. Following his motions with my eyes, I grasped without difficulty his desire and also the reason He wished me to lie down in the bottom of the boat so that I might be out of danger, for another and much larger prao was bearing down on us, evidently with an intent that was distinctly hostile.

I fell on my knees, tugging at the straps of my bedding roll. Doubtless, under the impression from that act of mine that I was about to comply with his considerate request, my pirate captain left me. His presence was needed

elsewhere.

The crew, in their own fashion, were at quarters, and had gone there with a quiet celerity which showed that it was by no means an unaccustomed thing. Some of them were standing by the sweeps, for the wind had dropped until there was almost a calm. Along the starboard side, with only their heads above the gunwale, was a rank of others, each with a semi-obsolete but extremely well-cared-for rifle in his hands. On a little platform, forward of our two-legged mast, a squad was ramming what appeared to be scrap iron down the throat of a brass gun which might well have passed its youthful days on Nelson's fleet. The captain, standing fully exposed by the two men who handled the big steering oar, anxiously watched the approaching prao.

She also carried a gun, an old swivel, the muzzle of which followed us as she jockeyed for an enfilading position. But we were the faster in that light wind, and the more easily turned by our sweeps, so that, try as she might, we always showed her our broadside.

Most heartily I cursed the luck that had brought me into that position. It would seem so ridiculous if I should get killed in a casual fight between two bunches of Malays, belonging on a practically unknown island in the Pacific. Still, one of the tenets of my philosophical creed says that a man who won't fight for his skin on occasion doesn't deserve to keep it intact. The buckles of that bedding roll were as obstinate as though an imp of Satan was holding them, but at last they yielded, and, opening the roll, I extracted therefrom my pet sporting rifle and the cartridges in their belt.

I felt better after the magazine closed upon its fill of venomous, soft-nosed bullets. The joy of fighting began to stir in my blood, as sooner or later it will in that of nearly every man who ever has been in action. If I had to go to the next world by so unpleasant a route, I resolved at least to send several of these Malays to meet me there. I knew little of fighting on the water. Still, a faint reminiscence of boyish reading seemed to indicate that to shoot

the steersman was the most desirable thing one could accomplish. This I started to do. The man was only two hundred yards away, and I don't miss at two hundred yards. There was plenty of light to sight by, too.

Then, just as I was about to fire, that pirate chief laid his hand on my shoulder. I was very much annoyed with him. His explanatory pantomime, however, was marvelously expressive. By it he made me understand that we were not to fire until fired upon, though why I could not quite determine. Orders of some sort, I gathered. But to console me, he pointed out that I wouldn't have to wait very long, and, glancing at the enemy, I saw that he was right. Her gun was trained directly upon us, and a man stood by the breech holding a torch with a blaze like a young bonfire. Promptly I ducked to the bottom, and the shot came.

That gun must have been loaded with the best end of a bushel of pot legs and nails and doorknobs and things, for never in my life had I heard a sound such as that made by the charge as it flew. Fortunately, it had not time to scatter, and it flew high, as doubtless it was intended to, for it cut both legs of our mast. The ponderous matting sail fell over our gun and trailed in the water alongside, crippling us so that for the time we lay helpless.

A ragged and ill-directed volley

A ragged and ill-directed volley crackled from the side of our prao, and a couple of yells followed it, but they were drowned in cheers of triumph. Our opponents pushed on their sweeps until it seemed as though their muscles would crack, as they swept toward us, in the teeth of what little wind there was, in order to take advantage of our defenseless state. Few rifle shots came from her, and those few were not answered by our men. They all were working with frantic haste to clear away the hampering wreckage, thus leaving the enemy to come on unchecked, save for what I could do.

I tried my best. They had reloaded their gun, which now was pointing straight forward, and again a man stood over it with his blazing torch. I dropped him. Another sprang to take his place, and he also went down, choking and sputtering, across the gun. A third followed, and a fourth; after that they hesitated for a moment, so that I had time to cram more cartridges into the fast emptying magazine of my piece, I had just finished when there was a yell of triumph from our side. The sail, ripped by busy knives, fell away in halves, leaving the brass gun glittering in the moonlight. Somebody came running with a hot coal from the cook fire, tossing it from one hand to another. A last toss landed into the vent of our gun. A roar followed, and for a moment a cloud of smoke from the black powder used hung over us, obliterating everything. Then the faint breeze caught it, stirred it, and drifted it gently away.

In my time I have seen the effect of many shots, but never before one of miscellaneous hardware, delivered at short range. The enemy's prao had been headed directly for ours, so that we had raked her as she would have raked us if she could. She was not more than forty yards away, and I had my glasses out, so that I could see to the minutest detail what our assorted cargo had done. I won't go into these details; it isn't worth while. But seasoned as I am to grisly sights, this one, for a moment, fairly turned me sick. But as my glasses swept toward her stern, and their field took in the little deck, which, while the prao was head on, had been concealed by the sail, I saw something there that made

me forget everything else.

This something was a woman: a woman dressed in an ordinary, civilized white frock, with a mass of hair which had escaped from its fastenings, and now fell in waves far below her knees. Had an angel appeared in the field of my glasses, there on that charnel ship, I could scarcely have been more surprised. In fact, she was not unlike my notion of what an angel might be—an avenging angel with the sword, which in this case was represented by a long kris with wicked, waving edges. Never before had I

seen a more beautiful or so terrible a face. It seemed power personified. The woman was a mestiza, I fancied, and, for one of her mixed race, far from young-thirty years or so. I could not see her coloring, for moonlight will not reveal that, but instinctively I knew that her skin was old ivory, and her hair dark bronze, and this I afterward

found was correct.

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For a second or two she stood there, and in her eyes, which seemed through my powerful glasses to be distant only a yard or two from mine, there shone what might have been the hoarded hatred of ages, as they looked upon us. Then she turned them away, and began quietly to give orders to her remnant of a crew about clearing away the wreckage, human and other. The men obeyed her as very few crews obey an officer, so far as my experience goes. And it did not surprise me in the least.

So absorbed had I been in this strange apparition, that until she turned her eyes away I did not notice her companion. Then I did notice him, and was not at all favorably impressed. He was a white man and neither English nor American; that much was certain. He was under middle size, though well made, and his dark though pale face reminded me of a handsome ferret, if there could be such a thing. When I first saw him, he was staring at me with an expression which enabled me to grasp the fact that he was no more prepossessed in my favor than I in his.

The woman noted this. Between two commands to her crew she paused long enough to point at me with the weapon she held, and say something that drove him into a frenzy. Gnashing his teeth, he caught up a rifle that lay at his feet and leveled it. Strange to say, this act of his afforded me a savage satisfaction. I was more than willing to take my chances with him. As I said before, I didn't like him, and besides, in some unexplainable way, I resented his presence there with that woman. I know that most people would think such a thing, from a man of my years, girth, and boasted philosophy, would be absurdly impossible. It seems so to me. But it is true, nevertheless.

Waiting, out of pure bravado, until he was aiming, I threw my own rifle to my shoulder. Then the woman laughed again, and stepped deliberately in front of him, covering his body with her own. Rarely have I been so disappointed, but I tried to be game. Lowering my piece, I took off my hat and bowed. This pleased her, for she nodded in return, with a flashing smile that I can see yet when I close my eyes. But I don't like to see it.

A shrill yell from one of our men, who pointed toward the harbor, took all eyes that way. And well he might yell, for between the two points of land there steamed a big launch, with a machine gun shining in her bow, towing behind her a long string of boats, of all sorts and sizes, crammed with men and bristling with the barrels of the

rifles they bore.

Turning, the other prao limped away like a wounded water bird. I supposed that the flotilla would chase and capture her, but nothing of the sort happened. She was allowed to go in peace; not an effort was made to stop her. Instead, casting off her tow, the swift launch sprang forward like a slipped greyhound, and headed straight for us. As she came alongside, I saw Chombo, smiling and holding out his hand in welcome, as though we had been parted only for the school vacation. He had grown old, as I had, but in spite of his seamed face and white, pointed beard, I should have known him anywhere. He almost lifted me over the gunwale into the launch, sat me with gentle force in a wicker armchair, and before he allowed me to speak, made me gulp down a very large quantity of the best sherry I ever tasted. It was a pity to treat it in so offhand a manner.

The boats which the launch had been towing had broken their file, and were paddling back to the harbor. In one of them somebody started a wailing song that was not without a certain sweetness. One boat after another took it up, so that we passed through a flood of weird melody, only to leave it behind us, lessening in the distance like the boats from which it came, as we rushed onward into the harbor. It was all so peaceful—pastoral! It was hard for me to believe that but a few minutes before I had been fighting for my life. Had it not been for the fouled rifle resting across my knees, I might almost have doubted my senses.

Chombo deluged me with questions about former friends and associates. which questions I answered as well as I could. Yet I felt that he listened with only half an ear, and that something weighed on his mind; I knew there was a weight on mine. What I had been through, now that the excitement was over, brought back with redoubled vigor what General Orde had said about Redfield. Yet I dreaded to ask Chombo, for fear of what I might hear, and probably because I knew that he dreaded to have me ask. But when at last the launch had deposited us on a stone landing stage, and we were walking up the steps which led to his house, I could wait no longer.

"I think I can guess the surprise of which you wrote me, Chombo," said I,

by way of an opening.

"Your friend, General Redfield?" he asked, with a sigh, in return. "If that is what you guessed, you are right; but I am sorry that you succeeded. Sorry in more ways than one, Quentin. Never have I waited the coming of any one with more impatience than yours. Never was any one more welcome. Yet I regret having brought you here at this time; things were different when I wrote you. It is not my custom to place my friends in danger."

"Oh, don't mind that!" I exclaimed.
"It's all in the day's work; and now
that it's over, it seems rather good

sport than otherwise."

"There's little sport in it, old friend. And perhaps the danger isn't all over," said Chombo, laying his hand on my shoulder. "And there is other danger, remember, besides that which threatens life or limb. Will you do me a favor, Quentin?" he went on hurriedly, be-

fore I could ask him to explain. "But I know you will. It is only this; ask me no questions until to-morrow, and then I'll tell you anything I know. It's late, now, and you're tired. As soon as you've had supper, you'd best go to bed. Here we are at the house."

I wanted no supper, I told him; but I would like to go to bed. I had not realized before how done up I really was. I had not rested well on that transport, and fighting, after all, is hard work. So Chombo guided me through many passages, lighted only by the huge candle he carried with him, and eventually brought me to a room, in which there was but one thing that I then noticed—the bed. But as he was leaving me I stopped him.

"Tell me but one thing, Chombo, and I'll let all the rest wait until to-morrow, as you ask," said I. "Is Redfield

well and happy?"

"He was well when I saw him yesterday—or, rather, the day before now," replied Chombo, with an odd sort of smile, pausing in the doorway. "As for his happiness, or that of any man, that is hard to say—yet I fancy he is happy. Very happy. Good night." And he left me, closing the door behind him.

Knowing Chombo as I did, I was sure that the smile with which he had favored me meant something that did not appear on the surface, and in a muddled sort of way I tried to think it out, but my head was too tired. Throwing off my clothes in a manner very different to my usual tidy custom, I blew out the candle and rolled into bed. Notwithstanding my doubts and anxieties and fears, I was asleep so quickly that I cannot remember my head touching the pillow.

I woke in utter bewilderment. For a little, I could not in the least remember where I was; and even after the events of the previous night came back to me, the bewilderment continued. The place in which I found myself was so very unlike anything I could have imagined. The night before it had been too dark to see, and I too tired to notice; but now no detail escaped me.

The room was very large, with stone The tiled walls and vaulted ceiling. floor was partially covered with wonderful mats, as fine in color as old Persian rugs. Many windows there were, all of them darkened by thick screens of loosely woven grass, which were kept soaked with water that they might cool the breezes that came through them, but which still let in enough light to enable one to see that the furniture, with the exception of the modem brass bedstead, was old mahogany, wonderfully carved. An open door gave entrance to a smaller room, brightly lighted, and on its ceiling danced sunbeams reflected from the surface of a filled bath, sunk below the floor level, and larger than some swimming pools. And all this on a remote island where one would expect a decent thatched hut to be a remarkable

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Fresh clothes had been laid out for me, and my toilet things unpacked while I slept. After a delicious wallow in the bath, I dressed, and had just finished when Chombo stole softly into the room. He smiled when he saw that I was dressed, and greeted me with cheerfulness that seemed rather forced, for he looked worn and tired.

"I expected to find you sleeping," said he. "How did you rest?"

"Bully!" I replied. "Never better.
And you?"

And you?"
"I didn't sleep. I couldn't. I had
too much to think about, Quent. Most
of the night I was walking up and

down the terrace. Breakfast will be

ready there by now. Will you come?" I followed him. The terrace of which he spoke, paved and railed with white marble, and shaded by palms, stood on the extreme edge of the point, looking out over the harbor mouth to the other house on the opposite point, five hundred yards away. There, as he said, a breakfast was spread for two, but in contrast to this peaceful and altogether pleasant arrangement the marble rail was banked inside by a parapet of sand bags, through which peeped two light Hotchkiss guns on field carriages. Between them was a tripod,

upon which was mounted a large telescope. On the flat roof of the house a man, such as had composed the crew of the *prao* which brought me, paced up and down, a rifle over his shoulder. At that moment, another man, who might have been a twin brother to the one on the roof, without the rifle, to be sure, but retaining the assortment of knives in his belt, brought in the breakfast. It was a real breakfast, too—a North American breakfast—and not the Spanish *almuerzo*. The compliment of this pleased me mightily, but those eternal knives had got on my nerves.

"Are all the inhabitants of these parts pirates—your servants and all?" I asked testily.

"Yes, more or less, when occasion or opportunity offers," Chombo replied simply. "Among these people piracy is a profession, not a crime. It is hedged about with rigid, custom-made laws like any other calling. I mean, of course, among the better people—who are very good people indeed when once you know them and their customs, and so can get at their points of view."

I nodded acquiescence. What he said seemed as strange and unreal as a comic opera. But for that matter, so did everything else in this odd world where I now found myself. It was all in keeping.

"Of course," Chombo went on, "there is here, as elsewhere, an element of riffraff—which reminds me, Quentin, that there's much that must be explained to you. If you'd begin by telling me exactly what happened on the prao, it would probably save time."

So I did tell him, while we ate—or rather, while I ate, for he touched nothing. But he listened attentively and in silence until I described the male companion of the amazon of the prao. Then a look of disgust came over his face.

"Constantinopoulos," said he. "What?" I gasped.

"He's a Greek, and as savage and cowardly as a wolf. No native scum of the islands is so low; none that isn't infinitely braver. But Dolores endures him. He's useful to her, I suppose, for he'll serve her, as all men will. And

probably his utter wickedness appeals

to her. Go on."

I was past astonishment by this time. Asking no questions, I told my story out. "But what in blazes does it all mean, Chombo?" I finished. "What's that sentry posted on the roof for? What are those guns doing here on the terrace? Why on earth should these people want to attack you or your prao, or anything else that is yours?"

"Come," he said, and, rising, led the way once more into the house, and to a room which evidently was a sort of office, for there were desks there and a great safe, made at a time when burglars must have known a great deal less than they now do. This safe he opened -with a key. From it he took one of a score of sacks, each as large as a shot bag. He untied the mouth and dumped into his hat two or three quarts of pearls, many of them as big as marrowfat peas, some the size of small cherries, or even larger-pearls such as I thought existed, in such quantities, only in fiction. The sight made me catch my breath. Chombo dumped them back, and, tying the mouth of the bag once more, flopped it carelessly down on the others.

"There's the answer to one of your questions," said he. "Those pearls you saw, and those in the other bags, are the accumulation of ten years, nearly. Since the insurrection and the war, and all the rest of it, it has been difficult to transport them safely to a market. So, as I didn't need the money, I let them accumulate. I'm sorry now that I

did."

"I should think you might well be in that tin safe!" said I, horrified. "Why, they must be worth nearly a

million!"

"Nearer three," said he, "I'd not dare put them on the market at once. But you're wrong about the safe. That's regarded in these parts as absolutely impregnable—almost looked upon with superstitious reverence."

"These benighted heathen never could have seen a can opener then," I snorted. "But where do they come from—

the pearls, I mean?"

He waved his hand toward the harbor, which showed through the window. "From there," said he. "I think it's the richest bed in the world, and from father to son we've fished it carefully, and guarded it more carefully still. Can you read old legal Spanish, Quent?"

"Somewhat. Old Spanish was rather

a fad of mine at one time."

"Glance over these, then," he said, handing me a bundle of parchment documents and one paper one. "I've something to see to for a little, but I'll be back."

He went, leaving me alone save for three million dollars' worth of pearls in the open safe. I tried to lock it, but I had no key, and the lock didn't work with a spring. Cursing his carelessness, I laid both pistols on the desk, close at hand, and started to study the documents.

I soon had finished them. There were only the original grants from the Spanish crown to Chombo's grandfather, and an acknowledgment of the American civil government that the titles were unassailable. I didn't see why he wanted me to read them, and said as much

when he returned.

"You will see, shortly," he replied. "I wanted you to satisfy yourself beyond the possibility of doubt that my titles are sound; it may save argument, later. For Dolores Valdez—the woman you saw on the *prao* out there—claims the water here, as well as the land that borders upon it, and all rights thereunto appertaining."

"She does! Why? On what

grounds?" I asked, interested.

"She claims them because she chooses to; she's a law unto herself, and has always been. She's the daughter of one Valdez, a Spaniard of low degree, and a native woman—a Tagala, of the north. Dolores was educated in Manila. Probably it was her sojourn there that brought home to her the fact that her native blood, and Tagalo at that, caused her to be regarded as one of an inferior race. She brooded over that until hatred of the whites has become almost a mania with her. She looks

with contempt on any man of native or mixed blood. But the whites she hates. Yet, over men she has a domination which is uncanny. It isn't only her beauty or her brains, though she has both. One can't account for it."

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"What sort of men does she dominate?" I asked.

"All sorts. You saw her. What did you think of her?"

"I thought she was very beautiful, of course," said I.

"Not that. Did she make no other impression?"

Î hesitated for a reply. She had made an impression upon me, but I could neither define nor express what it was, though I sought for words to do so. My hesitation, however, seemed to satisfy Chombo.

"Exactly," said he, with a nod. "You felt it, to a degree, even though you never spoke to her, saw her only from a distance, and then when she was doing her best to blow your head off—you, as tough an old bachelor as ever lived. Try to imagine, then, how she effects other men, whom she chooses to make an effort to affect in order to bend them to her will or lure them. But you can't imagine it, until she tries it on you, and then you'll know."

"I'll risk it," said I, rather more serenely than I really felt. "The trouble with you, Chombo, is that you're 'gone' on the woman, that's all."

"No," replied Chombo gravely. "Yet I, who know her base blood, and whose family is of the old grandeza of Spain; who know the worst of her, which is as bad as it well can be-even I have to fight against her influence, and even then I cannot wholly avoid it. I doubt if I'd have the courage to fire one of those guns against her house, no matter what she did. You saw that the captain of the prao did not fire until he actually was attacked. That was by my command. As I said, in a measure she has dominance over even me. What chance, then, would a simple gentleman, unsuspecting of evil, like your friend Redfield have?"

"Redfield!" I cried, in dismay. "You

don't mean to say that she's got hold

of him!" "He's at her house, now. She needed him, and he's there. She needed him as an excuse—as a shield that would lend a certain amount of respectability in appearance to the attempt, which she long had resolved to make, of acquiring my lagoon here, and all that is contained in it. General Redfield was looking for a profitable investment for his savings, together with a little money which was inherited by the young man who married his granddaughter. She told him that this property was hers, and he never seems to have thought of doubting her. For the paltry sum at his command, she pretends to sell him a half interest in a property that produces a fortune each year-and he accepts her offer. She, who like her father before her, has around her the offscourings of the islands, ready to do her unlawful bidding if they are strong enough; she, who like her father before her, has ever been a leader of ladrones, who has been in league with every leader of these thieves from Aguinaldo down, accuses me of conspiring against the authority of the United States-and he believes her. He believes that I am keeping her out of her rights, so that I have fortified my house, and do not dare fish my own lagoon."

"But why don't you dare fish your own lagoon?" I asked, for this sort of thing was not in the least like the Chombo I used to know, and what he said astonished me. "You know your titles are all right, and that the United States would help you out if necessary. Surely you're not afraid of her men—after the way you came out after them yesterday."

He dismissed this last suggestion with an impatient gesture of one hand. "I am afraid—afraid of that United States Government," said he impressively. "I was not until the general came here, and I understood that she had deceived him in this way. I only learned that two days ago. That attack upon the prao that was bringing you, I imagine, was because she fan-

cied that in you I had got a rival officer, and an active instead of a retired one, and feared accordingly. But listen; when she told your friend that I was conspiring against the United States Government, she has this much to found her statements upon. I was loyal to my own country. I never made a secret of that. But when that country unfortunately was overthrown, do you suppose that I ever favored native rule? Never for one moment! I know too well what that would mean. But the fact that I was a loyalist at one time, and am a Spaniard, can be made to mean much when twisted and distorted by a clever woman, and presented at Manila by an honorable though gullible man. It would take but little to have my estates, valuable as they are, confiscated. That is the reason that I dare not move in any way.

He leaned back in his chair, and I did a little very hard thinking for a minute or so. His predicament was very real; there could be no doubt of that. The question was how to get him out of it without at the same time compromising poor Redfield. But soon I came to what I still consider the only

feasible conclusion.

"How soon can you get a letter to

Tayung?" I asked.

"The launch can do it in six hours. I would have sent her for you, but she was not in order, then," Chombo re-

plied.

That would do. The transport would not leave before midnight, in all probability. I wrote a hasty letter to General Orde. I didn't ask for a brigade, but I did request him to send enough men to make a show of force, but above all, to send Philly, if she could by any possibility be got at in time. It would take her, at the most, about ten seconds to offset the influence any other woman might have obtained over her grandfather. Both to her and to the department commander I wrote also a complete account of things as they really When once these letters were started, and I saw the launch hull down on her way, I felt that much had been done, but not all. I resolved to go and see Redfield myself. And, in spite of Chombo's warnings and expostulations, I did

Nothing of a dangerous character happened. The fair Dolores was nowhere to be seen, but as I approached the house I passed my ferret-like friend with the unpronounceable name. He scowled at me fiercely, and I smiled sweetly in return. It did me no end

of good.

Redfield saw me before I reached the house, and ran down to meet me. His joy and surprise at seeing me were almost pathetic. Military as ever, despite his white, civilian dress, the dear old chap looked so well and so radiantly happy that a sharp pang shot through me at the thought that I would have to cloud this happiness. Almost at once he told me of the wonderful investment he had made, and then, like an old fool, as I am, I had to go and blurt out the whole tactless truth. He froze instantly.

"You always were easily deceived in people, my dear Drake," said he, with much dignity. "You're a poor judge of humankind. But in this case, perhaps, it's not so much to be wondered at, Señor de Torrenegro being so old a friend of yours. Even I was disposed to like him at first, until my eyes were opened to his disaffection toward our government, and, above all, of his unfair dealing with a helpless woman."

He paused, and with an inward grin I thought of that "helpless woman" as I had seen her on that *prao* of hers, with the *kris* in her hand, ordering the mangled bodies of the slain thrown overboard. I didn't let the grin appear, but I did tell Redfield what had happened. He became indignant.

"Drake, if it were any man but you sitting in this house and vilifying the owner of it, I would say that at least he was influenced by the contrast between that marble palace and this plain wooden structure; of ill-gotten wealth against honest—comparative—poverty. But of that I know you are incapable. But I happen to know that you are deceived in this matter as in others. You yourself admit that you were

asleep until after your crew was at quarters. That in itself, under the circumstances, was a hostile act, and very properly was so interpreted. Of course no one knew that you were on board. But the courage of that woman fills me with admiration-with admiration and awe, by Jove, sir!"

"But hang it, Redfield, didn't I tell you that I read the papers not an hour ago which put Chombo de Torrenegro's title beyond a doubt?" I cried, losing

all patience.

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"I don't doubt you did," he replied composedly. "You didn't, however, see the transfer from Torrenegro to the father of this lady, I take it." "No, I didn't," I retorted. "Did

you?"

"No. All her papers are deposited in Manila."

"What in the name of common sense have you to show for your money,

"Her receipt for it. Would you have

me doubt her word?"

Against such incredible quixotism as this I was helpless. Doubting a woman, in word or deed, had always been an unpardonable sin to Redfield's notions of chivalry. He gauged all the sex by Philly, and his adored, dead wife. So at last I did what I should have done in the first place; that is, I told him of having sent word to Orde in the matter, and begged him to allow the proper authorities to decide. This he readily agreed to do, and we pledged our words that until those authorities should appear, no hostile act should be committed by either side. Satisfied, I started to go, but at that moment Dolores Valdez herself appeared, and with her the Greek.

I stopped and talked to her for a minute or two, trying to analyze her undoubted charm, of which Chombo had spoken. It was a difficult thing to do. I came to the conclusion that her superabundant vitality had more to do with it than any other one attribute. I came also to the conclusion that, so far as Redfield was concerned, she was like any other woman; a thing to be worshiped impersonally, and from afar. Notwithstanding his profession, Redfield had more of the spiritual in his make-up than any other man I have ever seen. It was to those of grosser

clay that Dolores appealed.

Very well satisfied with myself, I returned and told Chombo of my success. He was not impressed in the way that I thought he ought to be. As soon as I had finished, he blew a whistle, which called a large gang of his pirates from nowhere in particular. To them he gave some orders, which had the effect, among others, of doubling the sentries and sending out scouts.

"Do you suppose for a moment that this trusting friend of yours-this gentleman among such people—will be able to keep the word he has given?" he asked, in answer to my rather indig-nant inquiries. "I am as sure of his good faith, Quent, as I am of yours. But he is just as sure of the good faith of any one, until he has actual proof of falseness. He'll tell Dolores what has been done, and consider that all-sufficient, so that he'll go to his sicsta with an easy mind. She'll be desperate, then, and is more than likely to make some desperate move, at once, before he wakes. She is not given to the mañana habit, so prevalent here. She'll trust to his gullibility and her own ready lies to straighten herself with him afterward if she's successful. But I don't intend that she shall be successful, that's all."

"Nonsense!" said I peevishly. "It's siesta time now."
"It is," he replied. "You'd better

go to sleep now, while you can."
"I will," said I, and so I did. I went to sleep, too, I was so sure that Chombo was wrong. But he was not wrong. He knew his people far better than I. Twenty minutes later he roused me.

"Our scouts have reported that they're coming," said he. "Coming in force, too. Get up if you want to see what happens. I've made all my preparations.

"What preparations?" I asked, struggling into the clothing that I had dis-

carded.

"Relieving the sentries, principally,"

he replied, with a vindictive gleam in his eyes. "I don't want them seen. Dolores isn't with them, the scouts say. So, if they expect to take us by surprise, it would be a pity to undeceive them too soon. I want to settle this

thing right now."

He hurried away, and in a minute I followed him, my freshly cleaned rifle in hand, to the terrace. There I found Chombo crouching behind the sand bags, peering out through one of the embrasures, and I stole, crouching, to his side, that I might not be seen from without. Lying on the pavement was a double rank of the inevitable pirates, alert and ready. At first there was nothing hostile that I could see.

"They're hiding down there at the foot of the slope, behind that shrubbery," whispered Chombo. "They came across in boats, and are waiting for others, who came around by land, to join them. That Greek is in command of the land forces, the scouts say. Heavens, Quentin, what an illimitable power that woman must have if she can infuse courage enough for an act like that into such a cur! Oh, by the way—tell me. Can you regulate those shrapnel shells for so short a range? Try, and see if you can do it; I can't."

Crawling to where the shells lay on the pavement, I did my best to comply with his request, but I, too, feared that the range was too short. Then I re-

turned to his side.

"They've come!" chuckled Chombo.
"You can see 'em now; they're lying so thick that there isn't cover enough to hide 'em. Look—but hark! What's that?"

It was the sound of a horse, coming at a wild run, to which Chombo referred. As though the sound was a signal, the attackers left their concealment and were crawling stealthily up the slope as the animal came within our sight. It was Redfield's old charger, from which he had refused to be parted, and on his back was Redfield himself, bareheaded and spurless, but riding as though for his life. Indeed, he was riding for what meant far more than life to him—his honor.

The attacking force was well up on the slope now, but without an instant's hesitation, Redfield tried to force his mount up there, also, in order to head the Malays off, and bravely the good old charger tried, but it was too much for him; would have been too much for him had he been in his prime, blown as he was. Overbalancing, he fell backward, but Redfield, with agility that would have been creditable in a man a third of his years, threw himself to the ground, landed on his feet, and, running to the front of the advancing line, drew a pistol.

"Halt!" he barked. "The first man

who moves forward, dies!"

It all was over in three seconds. For one of them he stood there, facing that murderous gang, all alone. I tried to shout a warning, but would better have saved my breath, for I saw the Greek rise from his cover. He was ahead of the line, about on a level with Redfield, who therefore did not see him. He raised a rifle and aimed it. I fired, I think I hit him, but I never shall know. All along Chombo had held the nearest Hotchckiss trained on the man, and at the same instant he pulled the lanyard. The shrapnel must have burst not ten yards in front of him, and there was little that resembled a man left. But he had fired, and Redfield pitched forward down the slope and lay still.

Forgetful of all else, I vaulted the parapet and raced down the steep slope, with Chombo beside me, and all the Malays a close second. This was the style of fighting they understood and enjoyed. Their rifles were left behind, and they were charging downhill. Now, for the first time, I understood how useful might be those knives which they carried. Never before had I taken pleasure in indiscriminate slaugh-

ter, but I did then.

We lifted my old friend as tenderly as we could, and, carrying him into the house, laid him on a bed there. There was no doctor. There would be none until the transport came, and Heaven only knew when that would be. But some of the old native women, Chombo said, from generations of prac-

tice, had nearly as much skill and much more experience than the average surgeon. They came, and, examining the wound, shook their heads, and my heart sank, though neither surgeon nor old woman was needed to tell me that a wound under the armpit and trending downward must be fatal to a man of Redfield's age. But whatever might have been the surgical qualifications of these dusky matrons, it is certain that no kinder or more efficient nurses ever lived. I always think kindly of their race on their account, and that of the fellows who followed us down the hill. As Chombo said, they were not bad people.

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Late that night the launch returned, bringing a note from the master of the transport promising haste, and reporting that the prao which had fought with ours was seen going south under full sail, and with the woman on board.

I cannot now separate the days as they passed. With incredible vitality Redfield lived on. At first he was un-conscious, but as the fever rose, he wandered in his mind, and he was back with the old regiment, in the old days. He lived over a great deal of his life in that space, and I like to think he was not unhappy. Once or twice he became partially conscious, and then he called plaintively for Philly. I don't think he knew me, but when I told him she was coming, he appeared to be satisfied.

Then the transport was reported, and running out I saw her dumpy hull and blessed yellow funnel with the tricolored band. The launch was sent streaking out to meet her, demanding Philly. And a doctor, if they had one, but that was an afterthought, then.

I did not see the launch return; I was by Redfield, who seemed to have rallied a little. But I heard the rustling of a skirt, and, looking up, saw Philly. But it was a Philly transfigured and etherealized by motherhood and grief for the old man who so long had been father and mother to her. In her arms she carried a bundle, from which a pink arm protruded and flapped aim-

lessly.

Redfield opened his eyes, and, seeing her, was not in the least surprised, but moved a hand toward her, so that she could take it. Unable to trust her voice, Philly bent and kissed him; then held out the baby for him to see. He smiled again, and with an effort which took nearly all of his remaining strength, extended his arms. In them Philly, still supporting the burden with her own, laid his greatgrandson.

"Little Jack!" he said weakly, passing one hand over the tiny, downy head. "Little Jack!" Then his arms

fell away.

"How did he know? How could he know?" I heard Philly whisper in amazement, as though to herself. But I suspected that he thought it was his own son, Philly's father, that he held, laid there for the first time. A moment later I was sure of it. Redfield suddenly rose almost to a sitting position, and spoke in his usual voice.

"Good-by, Jack," he said. "Take

care of yourself."

I had heard these words when they were spoken twenty years before. They were the last he had ever spoken to his son, as Jack was setting out on the expedition from which he never returned, And having said them, he fell back, and one of the old Malay women, who had grown fond of him, cried softly as she pulled the sheet up over his face.

And as I stood there, looking down on the dim outlines of that form, and Philly, her baby crushed between us, crying on my breast, I felt that my determination had become irrevocable, and that my days in the army at last

were over.







HIS is a romance of the theatre; the main characters a ballet girl and an army officer. To add glamour, if any were needed, a king unconsciously played the part of godfather to

its culmination.

There is nothing in fiction remotely resembling it, for actual life contrives so often to surpass the imagined; in one respect, too, it varies from many romances of either type—it has survived the climax of the chancel,

The hero told me the story himself, with that simplicity which only genuine feeling inspires, while the heroine busied herself with his accompaniments at the piano, for Forsell, the young lieutenant, is now Forsell, the baritone. His Don Giovanni was the sensation of years at Covent Garden last season, and in all likelihood will prove the sensation of this at the Metropolitan

A good many things contribute to his success aside from his voice, for nature, without whose help art—operatic, at least—never gets very far, has been good to him. In height, he is over six feet, broad and sinewy through army training, with a face such as Frank Dicksee might choose for one of his knights.

Five years he served in the Swedish

army, after his university course, both associations now contributing to a fin-ished command in poise and bearing. Finding his voice, and strongly leaning toward opera, he hesitated to give up his profession for an uncertainty, until King Oskar II, with a sympathy not always distinguishing royalty in its tamperings with art, allowed him to début as an officer. His first appearance, as Figaro in Rossini's "Barber of Seville," settled natural quandaries, and from then on rehearsals supplanted the drill. For some time he remained an officer in the Reserve Corps, but the exaction of obtaining royal permission for every move in constantly increasing engagements forced, finally, complete withdrawal.

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Meanwhile, a young ballet girl, seventeen years old, "beautiful, like all young girls of the ballet," as he ingenuously described her, caught his eye, which seems not to have resigned its military sense of appreciation. She, too, appears not to have been unobservant, and, actuated, of course; solely by art, went to him for lessons. She had ambition, a good voice, and that glorious enthusiasm of youth.

Actuated, and again, of course, by an interest quite impersonal, he took his first chance to tell the king of her laudable qualities, and told him, if would seem, with such eloquence that her début as *Gilda* in "Rigoletto" was announced almost as soon as the bari-

tone's carriage had rolled out of the

palace courtyard.

On that night he sang the rôle of her father, the *Jester*. "And my heart beat with an anxiety for her such as it had never shown for myself."

Exactly why, he did not then know, for his heart seems to have found out its sentiments before his head informed him of their existence; men are always

that way.

In the interim, prior to this remarkable discovery, she sang Juliet and Lakmé; perhaps it was the lines of Juliet that settled it, so many have found them convincing; at any rate, they were married,

And the king, with that fortitude in which a monarch's early training is supposed to peculiarly school him, consented to lose a delightful prima donna, that Madame Forsell might retire as a

homemaker.

"And my home is my strength," said Forsell, straightening himself to his full height, a tribute which seemed the very best he could give to her part in it. The musical education, too, that he so platonically imparted, now bears unexpected reward in the helpfulness which she gives him in his rôles. And there you have the key to the only enduring type of stage romance, or of any other—a mutual interest, and a mutual understanding of it.

And there, too, you have the paradox of it all: The good father and devoted family man, the most appeal-

ing of recent Don Giovannis!

A woman not of the theatre would likely continually wonder by how many routes he had finally arrived at his fascinations, for with every woman not of the theatre there would be small chance of a clear understanding.

But, quite probably, she sees, in all his air and bearing in the part, a pale reflection of the way in which he won her. Succeeding in her instance, he is leniently allowed to display his methods, which, from the first, even if interesting, were doubtless entirely transparent, as the best of man's prided subtleties are to a woman; though, as

in this case, she may not generally be philosopher enough to comprehend why other women should appreciate them,

too.

Scandinavia is an exacting, though a good, school, for a singer with a voice; such favored ones being few, they must appear everywhere and always. Forsell's fruits of this consequent versatility are eighty rôles; one of them, Don Giovanni, he has sung two hundred times; of another, the title part in Tschaikowsky's "Eugen Onegin," he gave one hundred repetitions in two years; in the thirty-one nights of each month, the sum of his average appearances was twenty-six.

The Italians call it "Serata d'Onore," because "Evening of Honor" sounds much more politely indirect than the bald, charity-grimed term of "Benefit."

In the days of her operatic beginnings, and in a little Neapolitan theatre where Caruso and Patti had left traditions, Miss Alice Nielsen received the tribute of five "Serate" before she realized quite what it meant.

Her manager of the moment, born with a business eye of such keenness that the most gifted "down-Easter" would have shrunk before it, had arranged the series in a quick succession that knew no precedent. He would, doubtless, have gone on indefinitely arranging more, but for sudden

revelations. The first evening that she drew up before the theatre, to find "Serata d'Onore," together with her name, in red letters over the portal, she experienced several new sensations; the chorus brought her small gifts of hand-kerchiefs, bits of ribbon, and little bouquets; the house was quite filled, and after the opera the manager, smiling benignly, brought to her dressing room an envelope containing, to be exact, the equivalent of thirteen dollars and sixty cents, in more or less battered

A week later, "Serata d'Onore" shone once more above the entrance, and all previous incidents were repeated. Then, at identical intervals, came a third, fourth, and fifth; two

variations only were in the programme, the chorus presented its gifts with a glumness increasing to gloom, and the sixty-eight lire dwindled to fifty.

At that point, she made inquiries; explanations, though brief, were complete, and the chorus was not loath to make them. A "Serata" was supposed to call forth Neapolitan appreciation of its object in the form of a full attendance; the chorus, not to be behindhand in generosity, was expected to shower modest gifts; while the manager, as his part in the occasion, was awaited to hand over the surplus proceeds. Then, she remembered two envelopes holding sixty-eight lire and three holding eighteen less, the presumed total surplus of five full houses; she also remembered the benign, even beaming, smiles that went with them; and "Serate," on her behalf, were discontinued.

Those were small beginnings to be accepted with cheerful willingness by a singer, who, in light opera, had broken the records straight across America. Shortly after that season's popular recognition in Naples, she was brought to the important San Carlo there, but it has taken seven years of uphill persevering to finally open the doors of the Metropolitan for her entrance, seven years of determined experience and self-faith, that, in her conditions, stand, perhaps, without parallel in music. At any moment she could have returned to her former successes; only last season Mr. Frohman made golden overtures for her reappearance in light opera on a great scale. But Miss Nielsen had chosen her way.

"I sacrificed nothing, I was doing what I aimed to do; I should have been miserable otherwise," was the simple summing up that she gave of it.

Duse understood her, and with the appreciation of the great artist taught her several rôles, among them the *Violetta* in "Traviata," with a patience that only one who has toiled really knows.

"The 'Dite alla giovane' in it," Miss Nielsen describes, "she wanted me to do as she did the same scene in 'Camille,' without any gestures, with tears in the voice, and then a final outburst. Sitting on a low stool at the far end of the room, she watched me as I began it, then slowly crawled toward me, holding me fast to her wishes by the grip of her eyes and her tense attitude as she crept nearer and nearer. 'You have talent,' she exclaimed, 'you turned pale!'

"It was months later that I confessed to her that I had cheated, and that the real reason of it was that she had

frightened me."

Suffering either develops or deadens our better selves, and in those days of close association Miss Nielsen learned how big it had left the heart of Duse, "Greater as a woman than as an actress."

She recalled, too, moments in which the tragedienne had hypnotized herself in the part on the stage, and afterward lay motionless, as one dead, and nondared approach her; the "Duse whose flame had aged her beyond her years."

There is small doubt that between these two women there was understanding, without need of words; the tragedienne knew without telling the singer's struggle, her unyielding will and purpose; and the singer, what need had she to question the source of that patient, gentle comprehension of the other? Such traits come only from sounding the bitter depths of endurance, in which they lay hidden.

At Covent Garden Opera, there have been moments when works were announced with trust to chance to supply rôles just then unfilled. Every Carmen must have her Micaëla, and none appeared on an occasion until Miss Nielsen volunteered her.

With every artist working upward, there is an unwritten law to take the opportunity and do one's best, for it may mean many more, and, again, none

at all

She came on that night, minus any rehearsal. Nearly shaking out of her slippers, she met Caruso in the wings. "Don't be frightened," he soothed. "Follow me, I'll turn my back to the audience and tell you every move."

Now, in Micaëla, though all should be beautiful, in action none need differ from another; they stand, move, and have their being on the same high heels, on the same identical spots. Caruso could likely have drawn a diagram of the Micaëla stage path in chalk on the boards. But it is one thing to know, and another to have the generous impulse to impart that knowledge, on open scene, with orchestral accompaniment.

If the audience saw anything strange in that night's "Carmen," it was that Don José not only found it, as usual, hard to lose Micaëla, but quite impossible, for, following Caruso step by step, Miss Nielsen had trod every spot

in her stage directions.

Picture to yourself a tenor singing the rôles of *Lohengrin*, *Siegfried*, and the *Prophet* at four dollars a performance; and, if you can, picture him perfectly happy in doing it.

Successful stage people have curious beginnings; oftener it is through the quality of humor that they survive

them.

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Slezak, the new tenor at the Metropolitan, though he was born in 1875, is, in this respect, still in his teens.

At seventeen and a half, and six feet tall, he was singing at Brunn one night in "Pagliacci," when the baritone, Adolf Robinson, "star" of the occasion, turned suddenly, as he caught the boy's voice sounding out in a phrase. "Come to me to-morrow," he said to him. "Likely you will be something."

With the next day, Slezak arrived at the baritone's, was told that he had a notable voice, and that the artist, with an artist's generous impulse, would

teach him.

"But we were poor; I was a machinist, and my parents could not support me while I studied, so I entered the army," said Slezak, of the outcome.

Two years later, getting, meanwhile, what training he could between drills and manœuvres, he was doing first tenor parts, at four dollars a night, at the theatre where he had originally sung in the chorus. There, Count

Hochberg, of the Berlin Opera, heard him in his third season, and promptly signed him for an engagement; with its expiration there came another at the Imperial Opera, in Vienna.

Not satisfied with his vocal method, a year ago Slezak gave up an offer of forty thousand dollars for the season, as against the meagre pay he had earned at the outset, that he might study in Paris with Jean de Reszke. As sequel, the ex-tenor journeyed down to Vienna last April, for the satisfaction of being present at his pu-

pil's reappearance in public.

Like Forsell, Slezak is a devoted husband and father, and that rare specimen, the domestic prima donna, will find it a difficult task to keep pace with his example. Each summer, with his wife, children, and a favorite black cat, he travels to some different corner of the world, that their combined minds may be enlightened; each winter the cavalcade journeys back to pass the musical season together in close companionship.

With an inborn joy in the theatre, he had at first longed to be a comedian —and the spirit of the comedian is still quick in him. What memories it has helped leave behind him! If all other sources of humor failed, the Viennese were safe in asking: "What has Slezak been doing to Schmedes?" For Schmedes, the Vienna tenor who sang here last season, like some other very large, good-hearted people, rises to practical jokes with a trusting serenity that is fatal. Even in the still hours he knew no safety.

It was two o'clock in the morning, when, unable to rest with a clear conscience, Slezak arose to enjoy himself

without one.

"Are you Herr Schmedes?" he called through the telephone, in broken German, fitting the character.

"Yes," came in sleepy impatience, "Herr Schmedes, the tenor."

Yes, of course, "the tenor." What other would at that hour have stickled for complete identification?

"How fortunate," was the ambiguous

rejoinder. "I am Lord Morley, at Ho-

tel Bristol."

"Delighted, I am sure." The voice sounded now quite wide awake. distinguished foreigner, of a nation not noted for its impulsiveness, could not sleep without a word with him!

"Who is singing in 'Lohengrin' Monday night?" sped to him over the wire.
"I, Schmedes," the answer rang, with an inference of pleasing news.

"Ah!" Deep, startling disappointment freighted the word. "I had hoped it was Slezak, they say he sings so beau-

But something yet worse was in store. Hesch, the basso, and Slezak were seated side by side in a room at the opera; down the corridor came a step that both recognized as that of Schmedes.

"It is an insult," began the tenor. "I know it," boomed the basso.

Neither had an idea what to say next, but both grew each moment more vociferously indignant.

Hearing the words, "shame," "insult," "outrage," in excited repetition as he drew nearer, Schmedes stopped in astonishment.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I hesitate to tell you," ventured Slezak, with that reluctance which spurs the innocent to rank curiosity.

"Yes, we hesitate to tell you," echoed Hesch, wounded feeling in every ac-

"To tell what?" cried the victim.

That was exactly the thing that they, too, had been wondering, but Slezak's invention sprang to the task.

"You see, it's this way, but I hesi-

"Don't," interposed Schmedes, "don't."

"If I must; but it will wound you." "Go on, go on," retorted his listener, "Mayr has been decorated with the Franz Josef order."

There was no need of more; Slezak's imagination could temporarily rest; Schmedes now furnished the ora-

tory.

Mayr! The newest engaged of all the singers! That boy with the order of Franz Josef-and he, Schmedes, the dean of the tenors; years of service: court concerts; royal recognition; overlooked, passed by for a boy--- Inhuman! Unjust! Words and breath failed together.

"I think I know how it is," began Slezak briskly, invention refreshed by a respite. "The Archbishop of Salz-

burg-

"What has he to do with it?" "Well, you know, Mayr's uncle is a Salzburg brewer-

"The archbishop? The brewer?" floundered Schmedes, trying to link the

plot together, "You see"—and Slezak played his Sherlock Holmes trump—"the archbishop had lots of that good bottled beer, and to get straight with the brewer got the Franz Josef order for the nephew. It is a-

But Schmedes could listen no longer: he was beyond the listening stage. He would have the matter brought before the emperor! When they offered him the Franz Josef order he would spurn it! He was above sharing honors with boys and bottled beer.

"Why not write to the court cham-berlain, Prince Montenuovo, and ask for an audience?" proposed Slezak

feelingly.

Schmedes grabbed at the idea. Five minutes later, he was driving to his club to write the letter, and to tell a!l he met there the iniquitous story of the Archbishop of Salzburg, the bottled beer, and the Franz Josef order.

Three more clubs knew the story by night, and at each a wave of smiles

followed his exit.

In two days the audience was to take place. Then it occurred to Slezak that Prince Montenuovo might not appreciate his gratuitous share in it.

"Perhaps it's not true," he said to Schmedes, who, eying him with sudden suspicion, asked: "Why?"

"Because I invented it," was the en-

lightenment.

## ORDERED UP INTO NINEVEH









HE pack train crawled upward with great labor, for the day was ending and there had been eight hours of work for the mules, with close to three hundred pounds in the packs, The beasts

were carrying crude ore, in which the gold nestled, to the great crushing machines of Nineveh, high in the Cordilleras of South America. Silent in the dusk above, the town lay like a lizard curled about a hot rock. All was heat, all stillness there, but the rocky trail rang with the slipping and the sliding of the mules.

A woman rode the bell-mare. She had no saddle, but sat upon a blanket cinched about the cross old gray leader. The woman was not used to horses, but she had missed the stage, and she was getting up into Nineveh—the thing for her to do. She scarcely felt the blasts of heat in the gloom, nor heard the words of the crude but excellent men about her.

She was looking for a man in Nineveh—a man whom she had once loved and married. She alone had received the clue of his hiding place; and it was her purpose now to bring him back to the States, to the laws of men, and to those of God afterward.

The boss packer reined up beside her on his saddle mule, dismounted, caught

her foot and arm, lifting her down as easily as a sack of grain.

"Your blanket's comin' apart a bit, lady," he said. "The old mare lightens up in a long hike like this. We all do. She needs cinchin' again. It's only a mile up to the town, but we don't want you hurt—after takin' care of you all day."

He chucked her on a freshly folded blanket. She thanked him—a tired woman with her heart full of miserable storms and no dawnings.

Nathan Reeder had made the world call him a wolf. He had even, at the last, estranged himself from the woman who had loved him, and left her in shame and poverty. He was young; a man who had lived beautiful and desperate moments in a single hour. In one of the latter, he had forged and fled to this American mining colony in the Andes. Only the woman knew where he had gone. There was a big reward for him. In the anguish and rebellion of the first hour, in the pressure of actual hunger, she had taken a commission from a detective agency to bring him back. And so she went up into Nineveh.

It was like a Western mining town, save for the Spanish touch upon the meagre buildings, and the whitecoated natives in the streets, and the service and the slavery. She found a house in which there was no bar; but the bars and the gambling houses were all about. From across the street, voices reached her as she sat in her room that night. At last she heard his voice, the voice of the man she wanted. She sat listening, a mighty beating in her heart.

"Talk as you want, Jim; but there's nothing like a sweet woman to go to, when you're tired and hungry—not in the stomach, but in the heart."

He spoke in a quick, careless way, which she knew well to mean that he

was desperate unto mania.

"You win, Jim. The money's yours. As I was saying, we're a lot of Ishmaelites out here, making beastly cash. Tell me any good of money without a lady? Not a lady, but the lady? There's only one for any man that lives. I murdered the heart of mine. The money's yours, again. You'd better quit, now, because I'll get it all back. You'll have to go a long way to break this bank. I'm rancid with money."

The other answered, but his voice, though heavier, did not penetrate. The

woman heard her own again:

"When we get money, we import champagne, Jim. Beer is just as good. Water is better still. What kids men are when they are left alone-babes with toys they tire of, one after another, and all futile as hell! Why, once, Jim, up on the prairies of the better continent, there was a morning when a drink of red liquor, charged with a vitriol that would burn the nap off your coat sleeve, was worth more to me than anything money can buy in Nineveh this night. And now I've got nothing but money, and I'll get yours. Painted paper and stamped metal! We need a woman three times a day to keep sweet, and then we throw them up. Look at the men about, Jim-isn't it so? I told you I'd take your money, Jim, if you kept on!"

There was just the murmur from the faro outfit for many seconds, and then a scornful laugh from Nat Reeder that pierced the way to the woman's heart.

"Painted paper and stamped metal and I lost my sweetheart and my soul to get it! You're a friend of mine, Jim Smallidge, and may never learn this lesson of mine. But if you ever get the one woman that Mammy Earth plucked for you, stick to her with the last clutch of your hand and the last twinkle of your brain. The face of God goes away in a black cloud if you don't, and leaves you an empty tin cup in a desert. That's about all from me, Jim. I'm getting maudlin, but I've won again."

The woman leaning out of the window knew that his mind was filled with suicidal horrors when he talked that way. She felt his heart calling for her, and there was something imperious, something that fought with her de-

stroying memories.

Though the activities of the faro outfit went on for hours, Reeder talked no more. Words seemed dead within him—save those which concerned the

blacks and reds of the layout.

The woman couldn't think of sleep. She was taking her bread from the law to bring him in. The man to make the arrest awaited her call, but did not know the face of his prey. She felt that Reeder's bigness was still unfettered, though his evil was abroad; that his fineness was still proof against the poison of his baser actions. And he wanted her so! It came to her that there is a wolf in every man, but that some of the wolves are more daring. His desperate need was for her, and for her alone. And so she listened on, forgetting the big pains of her body.

When the dawn had not yet come, but the gray of it was creeping up the mountains, the game stopped across the street, and Reeder and others emerged. She did not find him at first in the little crowd. The men moved out and about the street unsteadily to the brief, awful sleep of the drink-burned, who must face the horrid suffering of the coming day. In a parting of the group at length, Reeder appeared to her eyes in the light of the doorway—gambler, forger, husband of her early visions. He was all that a woman could ask, just as she had seen him first—slender as a cadet, steady as a man. Smallidge was with him.

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"Jim," he said, in a quiet, humorous tone, which she knew as well as she knew the house of their honeymoon. "I'm giving you back your pile. We'll forget the gambler end to-night. Besides. I've got too much money-half as much again as when I left home. It's between you and me. The other boys would have lost theirs to some one else, if not to me. Another thing -I want you to do a favor for me. There's a spring lock on the door of my room across the street. Here's the key. I have a duplicate. There'll be some stuff on the table and full directions what to do with it. I want you to follow these directions to the letter. Come back in an hour, but I won't be there."

"Where you goin'?" Jim asked, with

interest.

"Just you do as I say, pal. It will be all right for both you and me."

"You always were a strange feller, but I s'pose it's all right, Nat. I'll be

there in an hour.'

Reeder ascended the steps of the hotel under her eyes. She was fascinated, but frightened. Could he have heard from the packers that she had come, and was going to get away? She thought of signaling to the man who was to arrest him, but her heart was signaling to him who had made her love and hate. The spare, groomed figure put the thrills of a maiden into her heart. She rebelled, but did not call Reeder's enemy.

The gambler walked up the stairs in a steady, weary way and his every step added to her intensity. He passed her own locked door, and entered, with a key, the next room. She could have heard the scratch of his match through the thin partition, but it did not come. He sank into a chair with a sigh.

Utterly tired he was. She knew that from the last sound; and, more, that he was besieged with terrors of lone-liness, self-hate, and passion for her.

She recalled the delights of the man in his even days, as well as those periods of animal emancipation—which led him into the depths where the scorpions are; remembered the tales his friends had told of his cold and absolute physical courage. All in a moment, the understanding came that he had something of that feminine element of artists which needs the courage of another to tide him over his depressions of spirit. Reeder, up here in the heart of the Cordilleras, needed the hand and the broken heart of her. She was listening and thinking in that vague but furious manner which seems almost to be above physical conscious-

At last a match was struck in the next room; the chimney of the lamp lifted and put back. With an almost psychometric faculty, she sensed the traveling of his pen for many mo-

ments

He crossed the floor, and opened his door for a draught of air. The heat was intense in her own room. The desire came for one look at her husband in the lamplight. What had the months done to his face which only a

wife can read?

The boards of the floor did not creak and the lock of her room moved without sound. She faced the dark hall for an instant; then saw the faint bar on the floor from his lamp. Lest her own door swing and creak, though there was little or no breeze, she held it for a second; then moved with consummate slowness to the rift of light. Her slippered feet in the hallway gave no sound.

Reeder was sitting by the open window. Lamplight was upon his profile. His face was darkened by unspeakable suffering, and his eyes turned out upon the distances where moved the ghastliness of a mountain dawning. Upon the table under the lamp was the letter he had written; beside it, a six-shooter and a big leather pouch, stuffed with coins and currency.

"I dare not even write to her," he muttered. "A woman forgives much,

but not what I have done."

She saw it all. His going away, as he had explained to Jim Smallidge, meant the pistol on the table. She had hoped the letter to be for her; still, it was better. He was squaring

the forgery, and felt too mean even to

write her!

"There is an end, even to an angel's forgiveness," he added, in a low way, his eyes lost upon the castellated peaks. "Good old Jim will get the money to them and to her. I'm—well, I go out with the new day which I do not deserve. It should be night for a deed of darkness."

The dull pearl of morning light was behind him, when Reeder sat suddenly erect—the hot lamp between him and the fascinated eyes in the hall.

"I go out like an outlaw horse," he said, "like an outlaw horse that has dared to pit his strength against the craft of men. Whipped and lonely, I take the last trail—but with a prayer for the lady who loved me once."

He arose quickly, his face more calm. The woman's tongue cleaved like a reptile to the roof of her mouth. His hands were steady, as he tightly fastened, with a thong, the leather bag containing the money. The lamplight showed his face ashen, but there was not a quiver of his lips or fingers.

The woman, swaying in the hallway, had never seen Nathan Reeder with a finer face than was his now. He was restoring the money of the forgery and sending her what was left—"half as much again." He was taking his life with a bullet and a prayer for her.

She had come to cause his arrest and remained to feel the old love swing back to her heart like a tired homing to its cote after a long flight.

"God, who loves me not, love that lady of mine," he said, with a last look at the dawn and the mountains, picking up the six-shooter with a light, swift hand, and leaning forward to blow out the lamp.

She fell against the panels with a quick, wordless cry. His breath had touched the flame, and the room was dark, save for the gray in the window, the gray that was upon the mountains.

"Nat-I have come!"

His arm, with pistol half raised, was clear against the outer light. She caught from his hand the cold metal, filled with concentrated death. Reeder stepped back from her in the thick dawn dusk, no sound from his lips, as she sent the pistol flying out of the window

"I thought it was all over, Jessie," he muttered at last, not daring yet to reach for her hand, "and that you had met me beyond the pale."

She sat by the window in full daylight, and the man was bending down to her. The great glories of the morning were radiant upon the terrible peaks. Nineveh was stirring—tired, poisoned matter stirring from sleep. Her hands touched the full, fine head,

"Yes, I can love you again, boy o' mine," she whispered. "And, when the express office is open, I will go and repair with money the error of that one bad day of yours. A good name again for my——"

"A good name never, Jessie. Money will not give that back, but love from you again—that is all I need. Love and your sweet, glad face."

"All I ask," she answered, "is a chance to love on—and on!"

There was a heavy, hurried step in the hall. Jim Smallidge appeared at the door. Reeder had arisen and barred the passage.

"I found I didn't have to go away, after all, Jim," he said.

"Then there's nothin' for me to do," said Smallidge. "By the way, I picked up this six-shooter down on the sand by the door. It looks like yours."

"Thank you," said Reeder. "It is mine. I must have dropped it walking

From the far sea the sun came up brilliantly new, lit the Andes, those highest mounds of the western world, as the rays had lit the Himalayas when it was night here. Returning from the express office, while Nat Reeder was giving away his faro layout across the street, the woman encountered the agent who was to arrest her man.

"Our criminal does not seem to be in Nineveh," she said, in answer to his expectant look, "and I am giving up

the chase."



Seriousness of mood prevailing characteristic of the month's important plays. Hedwig Reicher shines as an English-speaking actress in poorly adapted version of "On the Eve." Forbes-Robertson exquisitely satisfying in Jerome's allegory, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." Margaret Anglin at her best in a splendid dramatization of "The Awakening of Helena Richie." John Drew by hard work gets some fun out of an adapted play from the French. "The Noble Spaniard," in spite of some ingenuity, on the whole stupid



IFTEEN new plays of one sort or another have been produced in New York theatres since I last wrote the chronicle of the month. Of that number a bare half dozen may still

be on view here when the first snow flies, while two or three may yet be tempting fate on "the road." But the tempting fate on "the road." remainder, from all appearances, will have long since passed to that unknown bourne, the storage warehouse, from whence bad plays do not return. As far as its more important offerings are concerned, the month's activities have been an exact antithesis of that which went before, when to be light and gay seemed to be the prevailing ambition of the playwrights. We have had some little froth this month, but more of frost. The conspicuous things, how-ever, have been serious in intent and execution.

Above the somewhat sterile prospect of conventional drama of the sort that comes and goes and leaves no trace, three events of the month stand out in

clear relief. First in importance was the appearance, I should say, of Miss Hedwig Reicher as an English-speaking star. The play in which she acts has comparatively little value, but she is a woman of exceptional skill and charm, and our stage is a gainer by her presence. Not less important, except for the fact that his is a temporary visit, whereas Miss Reicher promises a longer residence, is the return to America of Mr. Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, the English actor, whose new rôle, in an allegorical play by Jerome K. Jerome, provides an opportunity for once again enjoying the charm of his gentle art and listening to the melody of his beautiful and impressive speech. Finally, among the more important happenings of the month, is to be recorded the reappearance of Miss Margaret Anglin, who has been playing in Australia for a time, but now returns to present an exceptionally competent dramatization of the widely circulated story, Awakening of Helena Richie." a dozen farces, melodramas, and nondescript pieces, with two or three musical comedies, made up the rest of the

bill of fare, but the menu will be mostly changed before our calendars show the passage to another month.

Two years ago, while acting in the varied répertoire of the German theatre, Miss Reicher appeared as Anna Rickanskaya, a sort of Russian Joan of Arc, in Doctor Leopold Kampf's play, "On the Eve." And it is this same rôle, or, rather, one modeled upon it, which has been chosen for her début in English at the Hudson Theatre. Miss Martha Morton was intrusted with the work of making an adaptation of Doctor Kampf's original, but all that any human being could do to turn a sincere and poetic piece into a machine-made claptrap substitute, she has done. And when, in the usual author's speech on the opening night, Miss Morton alluded to her "collabora-tor," Doctor Kampf, thereby assuming an equal share in the original inspiration, the height of ludicrous pretense was reached.

Doctor Kampf is an enthusiast before he is a dramatist, and in consequence his original play suffers at times from an excess of dialogue intended as propaganda of the cause he loves. But it is permeated throughout with glowing passion, for which Miss Morton has merely substituted a lifeless, antiquated structure of cheap and lurid melodrama. The part of Anna is that of a noble and self-sacrificing woman who is devoted to the cause of the Russian revolutionaries, and who has become obsessed with their beliefs until they sway and move her every thought and action. She has seen their vision of a future freedom from abuse and wrongs, and has felt the need of daily, constant, watchful service in their cause. At the outset, she is seen as an inspiring figure in the gloomhaunted abode of Nihilist enthusiasts, who, in imminent peril of their lives, are printing a revolutionary newspa-Interwoven into the general tragedy is the more intimate one of the love of Anna and Vasali, a young revolutionist, who is ultimately destined to perish in an act of devotion to the cause. And in the first act, there is

already the hint of a great conflict. Vasali's love, hitherto nursed secretly in his own breast, is ready to burst forth in impassioned pleading to the woman, who, already conscious of a reciprocal passion, puts him aside the reciprocal passion, but him aside the reciprocal passion, but him aside the reciprocal passion, but him aside the reciprocal passion to the rec

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As Doctor Kampf wrote his play, and as it was produced here in German, and, in Paris, as "Le Grand Soir," where it created a veritable sensation, the grim sense of foreboding tragedy was felt throughout, while the motive of these lovers, struggling against their own passion and egoistic longings, came through a clear and ringing human note. In the original play, as in the adaptation, though in the latter somewhat clouded, the strength of the play was paramount in three scenes, the first, involving the moment of Vasali's suggestion of his passion; the second, Anna's admission of her love for him, interrupted by the news of the massacre of innocent people lured into the churches on the pretext of peace; and the third, and final, climatic scene, that in which Vasali, chosen to throw a bomb which is to destroy the treacherous governor-general, must himself go down in the general destruction. The signal for his act is a lighted candle, waved by Anna, who knows that it will mean his death.

So excellent is the acting of Miss Reicher in these scenes that the requisite thrill is almost always there, despite the playwright's blunders. Miss Morton, in fact, has made mincemeat of the best scenes, and discarded all the rest. So that, where the play is not Doctor Kampf's, it is hardly worth considering. In the original, the governor-general does not appear, the occasion for his destruction being a visit to the opera on the night in which his mistress, a certain dancer, Madame Flora, is to make an appearance. In Martha Morton's adaptation, both characters must appear, the former labeled chief of police, and the latter the typical wine-drinking, cigarette-smoking adventuress, who, with half a dozen

other women of the light sort, displays her shoulders and her lingerie. When, in the final act, *Flora* announces herself a revolutionist, and is immediately embraced by *Anna* in one of those gushingly sentimental scenes in which virtue triumphantly welcomes repentant vice, the height of the ridiculous is reached.

But the fervor of Miss Reicher's acting, and the power of the situation, in which, after *Vasali* has torn himself away, the woman nerves herself to the task of giving the fatal signal are am-

ply remunerative..

The quality which Miss Reicher seems most to lack, a certain passionate earnestness and capacity to respond to emotional excitement, has always been one of Miss Margaret Anglin's most pronounced assets. Since the days of Clara Morris' prime no actress on our stage has wept more tears. In fact, on more than one occasion sympathy for her heroines has been drowned in the salty distillation. Miss Anglin has apparently profited by criticism, and the sorrows of Helena Richie, if not extra dry, show at least a more discreet use of tears. Anglin's performance of the rôle of Mrs. Deland's heroine is, in fact, a very beautiful example of fine emotional acting, lightened and varied, as it needs to be, in the earlier passages of the story. Here Helena, as yet unconscious of her duty to society at large, is still the individualist, satisfied in the opinion that her life is her own to lead, and that, so long as she does not visibly encroach upon the rights of others, they have no rights to demand of her. Mrs. Deland's book, in its leisurely way, expounds the fallacy of this notion, and Miss Charlotte Thompson, taking her cue from the author of the story, succeeds in creating an interest in the character and surroundings before attempting to drive home the vital moral of the tale.

Not all of the characters of the book come to life as happily in the dramatization and the acting as *Helena* herself, but the play serves to give expression to the general story, and is

quite lucid. And the latter is a quality most book plays lack. If it does not quite succeed in conveying an impression of the awakening, or if the process of illumination in the woman's soul appears a little hurried and lacking in conviction, it is still powerfully suggestive of the working of the psychological process out of which comes trengthened character and redemption.

Of a play based upon a so widely read a story it is unnecessary to give more than a brief synopsis, but it may be well to remind those who have not yet seen the piece at the Savoy that it places before them the not necessarily supposititious case of a woman who has been disappointed in her marriage, and whose husband, in drink, has brought a hurt upon their child, which resulted its death. Thereupon, Helena Richie, taking her happiness where she has found it, has lived with Lloyd Prior, making her home in a little Pennsylvania village, where the man passes for her brother until the real truth is disclosed. In the meantime, the maternal instinct has been again stirred in the presence of the little boy David, left in Helena's care by Doctor Lavender. When news comes, finally, that her husband has died, Lloyd Prior grudgingly consents to keep his promise of marriage, but, to Helena's astonishment, points out the impracticability of allowing her to continue her care of David. At this point, and in a subsequent scene, in which Helena is forced to confide her secret to Doctor Lavender, the dramatic tension is at its height. Both these scenes Miss Anglin plays with a surpassing wealth of emotional expressiveness, yet with a temperance and sureness of means which have not always characterized her work.

John Findlay's Doctor Lavender, though popularly sentimental, is a somewhat narrowed figure, but it serves fairly well, as does the Sam Wright of George Probert, the Martha of Sally Williams, and the Lloyd Prior of Eugene Ormonde. The child is prettily played by Raymond Hackett.

The exquisite beauty of Mr. Forbes-

Robertson's acting, the lyric quality of his speech, the ascetic tenderness of his personality, and the communicating intelligence of his general method, all serve to make his presence on our stage an occasion that cannot be too heartily appreciated. "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" is allegorical rather than essentially dramatic, and it is imbued with a wholesome lesson, but it would be the greatest of pities if the idea should become current that Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's play belongs to the realm of tedious, moralizing dra-matic sermons. It is, to be sure, a sort of theatrical morality, and its central figure, though in modern guise, is undoubtedly intended to suggest the Christ, but the characters are so human throughout as to be clearly understood, and, indeed, for a time, of such common mortal clay as to be heartily despised. But for the success of "The Servant in the House," it resembles slightly in its major theme, it is possible that the play would not have reached the stage, but there can be no thought of plagiarism in the matter, especially as "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" had existence as a literary sketch long before Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy's play was heard of.

The play, which is presented at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, introduces the dwellers in a cheap Bloomsbury lodging house, first seen in a prologue, and severally set forth as a cheat, a sloven, a painted lady, a shrew, a coward, a cad, a satyr, and so forth, these labels being discarded in the second act when the people assume their proper names, though their characteristics remain the same. Here the slight and somewhat familiar story revolves about the pro-posed sale of an unfortunate girl to a wealthy suitor by her avaricious, but outwardly respectable, parents. general meanness of the congregation is relentlessly set forth. The landlady is harsh and grasping, and her guests embody all sorts of meanness, from discomforting ill temper and petty vanity to downright dishonesty and selfishness. In the soul of the little slavey alone gleams a hope of something better, some idea that there must be a world outside her narrow sphere where life is beautiful and worth the living,

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Into this company of degraded souls comes the Passer-By, answering the vague yearnings of the little household drudge, and discerning in each inmate of the house the last vestige of remaining virtue. And, in a spirit of gentle humility, by the power of his divine faith in the ultimate good, through the operation of the principle of brotherly love and mutual service. he is able eventually to bring back to each and all of them their better selves. The result is that the old satyr, no longer pursuing the girl who loathes him, joins her hand with that of the man she loves, while the reformed parents, once more united in affection, look on in contentment and new happiness. Everybody is transfigured, and a miracle has been accomplished.

If it all seems too good to be true, or if, with a trace of recurring cynicism the question comes: "Could all this happen?" the answer is that the play is not for cynics, but for those who would enjoy the stimulating sensation of seeing evil changed into good before their eyes in response to a law that is universal, however tardy its

operation may seem at times. That the play in itself is an exceptionally fine thing, as a work of art, will hardly be averred, but that, in effect, it becomes so with Mr. Forbes-Robertson to act it, is undoubtedly a fact. His impersonation of the Passer-By is thoroughly sincere and earnest, dignified and gentle, and wholly moving and impressive. His authoritative repose, his restrained but eloquent and graceful gesture, and his musical and feeling utterance combine to make his presence on the stage a delight. In his supporting company, the most conspicuously successful artist is Miss Haidee Wright, whose performance of the painted lady is wonderfully appealing, but the company is generally excellent and compares very favorably with that which supported the actor in London.

To mention the name of John Drew

after that of Mr. Forbes-Robertson is to pass at once to lighter things. I am not one of those who believe that the art of the comedy is to be despised, but it must be admitted that after the plays I have just discussed a consideration of any work by the Messieurs R. de Flers and G. de Callaivet is like a slide downhill. To our playgoers they are best known by "Love Watches," in which Miss Billie Burke Gladys Unger is is still appearing. again the adapter of the new vehicle for Mr. Drew, but it has not been so skillfully accomplished, possibly because "L'Ane de Buridan," its original, contained a certain proportion of that particular kind of Gallic humor which American playgoers do not seem to relish. As "Inconstant George," the piece at the Empire has enough fun, however, to make it fairly popular when conjoined to a personal popularity so great as Mr. Drew's.

John Drew is a cheerful, willing worker, and not for many seasons has he had to work so hard. The hero of the play is a young dandy, who con-fesses to an anæmic will, especially where women are concerned. He is forever falling in love, and every appointment with a woman is interrupted by the arrival of the several others in his favor, the list of his inamoratas including a variety of females, ranging from a music-hall dancer to the presumably respectable wife of his bestrespected friend. This friend, being a man of the gay French world, is not the least upset when he discovers the flirtation that has been going on, and he even calls upon George in the middle of the night, to suggest an amicable arrangement of the difficulty. However, his cheerfulness is enforced by the knowledge that his pretty ward, Micheline, has set her cap for George. As she is a young person who generally has her way, he feels confident that the trouble will be naturally adjusted. So, indeed, it is, the capricious young woman making George a willing victim in the end.

For the rôle of Micheline, Miss Mary

Boland is hardly an ideal selection. either personally, temperamentally, or artistically, but it is a rôle in which few actresses could fail, and she wins much favor. Mr. Drew plays gayly, but he is obliged to lay on the strokes broadly. However, the result is undeniably funny at times.

"The Intruders," by Mr. Thompson

"The Intruders," by Mr. Thompson Buchanan, the clever young author of "A Woman's Way," in which Miss Grace George is still appearing, was quickly withdrawn from the Bijou Theatre. It contained a good idea and some capital dialogue and situations, but they were not adroitly enough compounded to create sustained interest and illusion. Tarrying somewhat longer, but probably doomed to disappear from New York before this reaches the readers of AINSLEE's for December, "The Noble Spaniard," by W. Somerset Maugham, represents another attempt gone wrong.

"The Noble Spaniard" was produced at the Criterion. It shows how the Duke of Hermanos falls madly in love with the beautiful Marion Nairne, a young widow, who is spending her summer at Boulogne, under the excellent chaperonage of one Justice Proudfoot and his wife. Hermanos, unable to control his passion, forces his way into the house, makes violent protestations of undying affection to the girl, and being informed that she is already married-that seeming to the girl the only way to get rid of him-declares that the world is not large enough to hold both him and her husband. Thereupon the plot reveals how Hermanos mistakes the elderly Proudfoot for his rival, and how the elderly Mrs. Justice Proudfoot is betrayed into believing that the Spaniard's ardent attentions are really intended for her. A certain amount of ingenuity is revealed in the complications, but the result, on the whole, is stupid. Mr. Edeson plays the Spaniard with plenty of fire and dash. The acting generally, including that of Miss Rose Coghlan, is more remarkable for noise and bustle than for any other distinguishing quality.



The beginning of a new year for Ainslee's. Strained and artificial is Justus Miles Forman's "Jason." "The Bride of the Mistletoe," by James Lane Allen, but the beginning of a cycle of three stories. Edgar Saltus presents a picture of unmitigated wantonness in "Daughters of the Rich." No new light is thrown upon his subject by Hutchins Hapgood in "An Anarchist Woman." "The Shadow of the Crescent," by Edward B. Mitchell, is an adventure story pure and simple. David Graham Phillips makes an appeal to the prurient imagination in "The Hungry Heart." There is a plot, but nothing more, in "Half a Chance," by Frederic S. Isham



HIS is the last issue of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE for the year 1909, and we are going to take advantage of the opportunity to indulge ourselves by recalling to you a few of the things that

AINSLEE's has done for you in the past twelvemonth. We say that these things have been done for you, partly—perhaps chiefly—because that is what the magazine is for, and partly because of the number and character of the letters of approbation that you have sent

You have read in these pages the work of some of the most popular and successful writers of fiction of the twentieth century, authors whose stories are in constant demand by publishers as well as the reading public. George Barr McCutcheon and Harold MacGrath are foremost among them, and if Leonard Merrick, Horace A. Vachell, Joseph C. Lincoln, Mary R. S. Andrews, H. F. Prevost Battersby, James Branch Cabell, Arthur Stanwood Pier, John-Kendrick Bangs, Herman Whitaker, and Edith Macvane are less widely read it is not because of the inferiority of their work.

The readers of a magazine which numbers these authors among its contributors, more or less constant, are to be congratulated, and you have had all of them this year. It means a great deal, in time and money and energy, to get together so brilliant a company as this, and the publishers of AINSLEE'S have been lavish in their expenditure to get them for you. Read the whole of this current number, as an example, and see if you have any grounds for disagreement with us.

So much for the past year. The January number, beginning another twelve months, is going to be one that will eclipse most of its predecessors. You may possibly not be impressed so much by "the bubble reputation," but if you find a flaw in any of the stories we shall be surprised. We think your verdict will be that there has seldom been presented a collection of stories which is, on the whole, so extraordinary as this will be. There is not a commonplace tale in the whole list. Every one of them is fresh and original, thoroughly alive and brimming over with what is called, for want of a better phrase, human interest.

Mr. McCutcheon's Graustark story will be concluded, and its ending is more exciting than you have supposed it con Edit sorb ters and stori est, W. this men mos. Jane Artl tribu

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it could be. The complete novel, by Edith Macvane, is a love story of absorbing interest. H. F. Prevost Battersby will have another of his fascinating short stories. Elliott Flower and H. G. Paine will contribute stories which, for strength and interest, they have never equaled. Mrs. W. K. Clifford has sent us a tale for this number as unexpected in dénouement as it is charming in theme and atmosphere. Campbell Mac Culloch, Jane W. Guthrie, Owen Oliver, and Arthur D. Howden Smith will all contribute stories of unexampled excellence.

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Justus Miles Forman cannot get away from the mannerisms which he has so long cultivated to the detriment, it must be said, of his work. "Jason," lately published by Harper & Brothers, is full of them. He evidently takes his "art" too seriously; he never tells a story, he makes literature. At least that seems to be his mental attitude. Of course this criticism may be a mistaken one-criticism, in any sense, is apt to be-but the solemn gravity with which he handles trivial details, as though some tremendous issue was involved in them, the portentous novelty with which he invests his descriptions of commonplace occurrences, strange diction which he puts into the mouths of his characters, all help to give the impression of Mr. Forman's great reverence for his art.

"Jason" contains the materials for a good story, not a great one, but one which might interest and entertain if it were simply and directly told. Sainte Marie, the young Béarnais nobleman; Helen Benham, the American heiress; old David Stewart, her grandfather; Coira O'Hara and her father are all of them characters with decided possibilities. The mysterious disappearance of young Arthur Benham, Helen's brother, and the evil machinations of Captain Stewart, the uncle, aided by O'Hara, furnish the substance for a good plot, with Ste. Marie as the hero. But Mr. Forman's devotion to the illu-

sion of rhetoric gradually estranges him from his characters and disintegrates his story. Ste. Marie soon ceases to be the reckless knight-errant, equal to all emergencies, and becomes pitiably inefficient. We begin with the conviction that he is a marvel of energy and enterprise, whose achievements have made him famous, and find, when he takes up the search for Arthur, that he is merely a rather foolish boy with nothing to guide him but intuition. At the outset he falls madly in love with Helen, and winds up madly devoted to Coira.

Captain Stewart, however, is a consistent villain to the end. Such aberrations as he discloses may, for the author's sake, be attributed to hypoc-

The tale is strained and artificial, but shows no marks of deterioration from the standard of Mr. Forman's previous work—except his earlier short stories.

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Criticism of James Lane Allen's book, "The Bride of the Mistletoe," published by the Macmillan Company, is forestalled by the author's announcement in his prefatory remarks that it is to be followed by two others, adding that "the three works will serve to complete each other, and they complete a cycle of the theme."

Under the circumstances, therefore, any review of this book must necessarily be inadequate, for, considering its nature, it would be unjust to the author to undertake to analyze or argue about it. He gives us no hint, here, as to how "the cycle of the theme" is to be completed. He describes a husband and a wife, both middle-aged, as passing through a crisis in their relations, mental and emotional, toward each other, and leaves them in the midst of it, inferentially postponing his exposition of the outcome to the subsequent volumes. Whether or not they will throw any light upon the "theme" remains to be seen.

In the meantime, it may serve to whet the reader's curiosity to note

that in the course of a discussion between husband and wife the latter says that she has been reading a book written by "a deep, grave German, and it is worked out in a deep, grave German way. The whole purpose of it is to show that any woman in the life of any man is merely—an Incident. She may be this to him, she may be that to him, for a briefer time, for a greater time; but all along and in the end, at bottom, she is to him—an Incident."

Her husband responds by pointing to a stack of magazines on his desk containing the work of a woman, "the sole purpose of which is to prove that any man is merely an Incident in the life of any woman. He may be this to her, he may be that to her, for a briefer time, for a greater time; but all along, and in the end, beneath everything else, he is to her—an Incident."

Perhaps this is the theme which Mr. Allen is undertaking to develop. In this volume the woman, at any rate, has not brought herself to regard the man as an Incident. Possibly she will.



As grim a tale as has appeared in some time is a new volume by Edgar Saltus, called "Daughters of the Rich," published by Mitchell Kennerly.

A good many important things of the representatives of predatory wealth in the past few years, stories of all kinds have been told of their manners, their morals, and their amusements, but nobody has had the hardihood to put into print such a picture of unmitigated wantonness as Mr. Saltus has here drawn.

There is nothing altogether new, and, therefore, nothing altogether shocking—because of its familiarity—in the suggestiveness of the story. It is the utter perversion that is disclosed by the heroine in the last chapter that makes the story a revolting one, the more so because of her previous characterization as a woman of education, of refinement and attractiveness. One cannot help feeling, with relief, that Mr. Saltus must have made a heavy draft

upon his imagination to conceive of such a woman as Maud Barhyte shows herself to be in her final interview with Welden. The description of the manner of Sally's death in the first chapter, Welden's account of it to Maud, and her reception of it at the end, taking into consideration all that is told in the interval, are what gives the reader the sensation of something like revolt.

The society that Mr. Saltus describes is degenerate, and one need not be burdened with any degree of prudishness to feel, as he lays the book aside, a sense of unutterable relief that he has parted company with its people.

The veneer of refinement with which the tale is covered, the author's cleverness, his finished, epigrammatic style, only magnify the repulsiveness of the book, and we find, amid frequent discouragements, cause for congratulation that offenses of this kind are so few.



Mr. Hutchins Hapgood has chosen an unfortunate method in presenting what he calls "the temperament of revolt" in "An Anarchist Woman," published by Duffield & Co. If he had adopted the biographical instead of the autobiographical style in giving the story of Marie the book would, it seems to us, have been much more impressive, but he has chosen to let the girl tell her own story in what purports to be extracts of genuine letters to him.

We are given to understand that it is not an unusual story; the child of poverty, born in a Chicago slum, put to work by her parents before the time prescribed by law, a factory hand, a shopgirl, and a domestic servant imposed upon by her employers always, she finally becomes a woman of the streets. Here her career ceases to be typical, for she is saved by an idealist, known as Terry, who introduces her to the anarchist's view of society, and her associates as well as her occupation are changed, and she develops "the temperament of revolt."

It is not easy to see and understand the purport of all this, for there has so she relike tion

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been a wide dissemination of the facts and opinions of the book through the propaganda of the anarchists, the socialists, and even the muckrakers, and the point of view of the child of the slums has been pretty thoroughly exploited. Mr. Hapgood seems to feel that his book in some way throws a new light upon a recently developed problem, but to us it seems to be merely · repetition.

Marie's story, as she tells it, is not so impressive as it might be, because she apparently never loses sight of the relation between her and her audience; she is more absorbed in the effect it is likely to produce than in her recollection of her own sufferings. Her own recital, Mr. Hapgood's description of her as emotional and sensual, and the very frank references to her generally loose life go far to render her tale un-

convincing.

"The Shadow of the Crescent," by Edward B. Mitchell, published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, is an adventure story pure and simple, one of the crop that seems, of late, to be so plentiful. It begins in Paris, is continued in New York, and winds up in Turkey in the midst of the scenes and excitement of a revolution engineered

by the Young Turks.

The young man who plays the leading part in the shifting action is Ron-ald Lampton-American, of coursewhose curiosity involves him, somewhat unnecessarily, in the machinations of a mysterious gentleman named Kara, whom he meets and loses again in Paris. Lampton had inherited from an uncle a very comfortable fortune, conferring upon him a leisure which, as it turned out, was seriously modified by his uncle's testamentary injunction to care for a young woman, euphoniously named Doris Revere, who had been the deceased gentleman's ward. Lampton promptly falls in love with her. They come to New York together—properly chaperoned, be it rememberedwhere their troubles begin. Certain disreputable denizens of the lower West Side, the region known as the Syrian quarter, begin to manifest, for some obscure reasons, an undue interest in Doris, and she is eventually kidnapped.

If the reader can imagine young Mr. Lampton's state of mind when Doris disappears-taken almost from under his eyes by a gang of the aforesaid foreigners-he will not be surprised that the young man's pursuit of her takes him to Turkey, and he will be prepared also for Kara's reappearance. And if his interest continues up to this point he will probably resent any further enlightenment by a reviewer.



David Graham Phillips' output still continues to be up to its abnormal capacity. "Joshua Craig" appeared less than six months ago, and here is another book running to five hundred pages. "The Hungry Heart" is published by D. Appleton & Co., and will probably receive a welcome equal at least to that given to its predecessor, little as it deserves it. "Joshua Craig" had no substantial claim to such popularity as it achieved, but "The Hungry Heart" is not entitled to any.

It is a book reeking with a sensuality that has no justification, and has no place between the covers of a book, unless it be a treatise on morbid psychology. The animalism of Courtney Vaughan and Basil Gallatin is repulsive enough of itself, but the minute descriptions of its symptoms and manifesta-

tions are inexcusable.

The appeal in this novel of Mr. Phillips is frankly made to the prurient imagination. It cannot be seriously claimed that the story presents any problem which justifies an exposition of the details of the intrigue between Courtney and Basil. Richard Vaughan's unconscious neglect of his wife was not such as to prompt her to seek consolation in the arms of another man; it was not more than most wives would take as part of the day's work; She had no cause to think that it was due to anything but absorption in his profession. She had every reason to

feel certain of his affection. Neither does her character display any unusual complexities. Therefore her surrender to Gallatin is utterly without motive, and her case is not sufficiently typical

to give rise to a "problem."

Books of this class are euphemistically called "daring." "The Hungry Heart" is daring beyond belief. The story consists of little more than a series of description of further meetings between the man and the woman. The beginning gives a picture of the conjugal happiness of Vaughan and his wife, and at the end comes their reconciliation in spite of all that precedes it. Vaughan, in maudlin apology, assures her that he is a different man from what he was, and as if to extenuate her offense, says he knows she never loved Gallatin!

The book leaves an acrid taste that

has no antidote.



"Half a Chance," by Frederick S. Isham, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, has a plot and reasonable action, but nothing more. It is English in setting and characters, and is without atmosphere or local color. We suppose it would be called by enthusiastic booksellers a human-interest story.

The story begins with a description of a ship bound for Australia with a cargo of convicts destined for the penal colony, and halts briefly to introduce the characters, who include, among others, Lord Ronsdale, of doubtful reputation; Jocelyn Wray, a little girl; her uncle, Sir Charles, and a very fierce convict known as the "Presco Pet." The ship is wrecked, and the child is saved by the convict who, it is believed, is drowned.

So much by way of introduction. Eight years later, in London, John Steele has established himself as a successful barrister, with a weakness for the defense of alleged criminals. Jocelyn Wray reappears as a most attractive young woman, and Lord Ronsdale as an ardent but somewhat distrusted suitor. The action of the tale is now somewhat deliberate in order to give Steele time to fall in love with the heroine and Ronsdale a chance to develop the suspicions which his jealousy has stimulated. As the story proceeds it becomes evident that there is something in Ronsdale's past that he is anxious to conceal, something which is connected with his suspicion of Steele. As his misgivings crystallize into the conviction that Steele is an escaped convict the narrative begins to move more briskly. The reader can now make his own guess as to the dénouement,

The story has a curious flavor of the adventure and mystery literature of a generation ago, probably because the time when England transported her criminals to Australia is recalled by the description of the convict ship.

It is not a particularly notable book, but it has the merit of reasonably good construction, it is easy to read, and has its fair share of interest.



#### Important New Books.

"A Life for a Life," Robert Herrick, Macmillan Co.

"Aunt Amity's Silver Wedding," Ruth Mc-Enery Stuart, Century Co.

"In Ambush," Marie Van Vorst, J. B. Lippincott Co.
"As It Happened," Ashton Hilliers, G. P.

Putnam's Sons,
"The Chronicles of Rhoda," Florence

Tinsley Cox, Small, Maynard & Co.
"Zandrie," Marian E. Richards, Century

Co. "Through the Wall," Cleveland Moffet, D. Appleton & Co.
"A Pixy in Petticoats," John Trevanna,

Moffat, Yard & Co. Gentle Knight of Old Brandenburg,

"A Gentle Knight of Old Brandenburg, Charles Major, Macmillan Co.
"The Man in the Tower," Rupert S. Holland, J. B. Lippincott Co.
"The Island of Regeneration," Cyrus Townsend Brady, Dodd, Mead & Co.
"The Oath of Allegiance," Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
"Virginia of the Air Lines," Herbert Quick, Bobbs-Merrill Co.
"Martin Eden" Jack London, Macmillan

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Co. "The White Prophet," Hall Caine, D. Appleton & Co.

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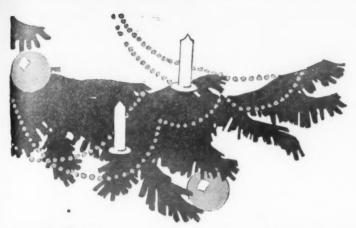
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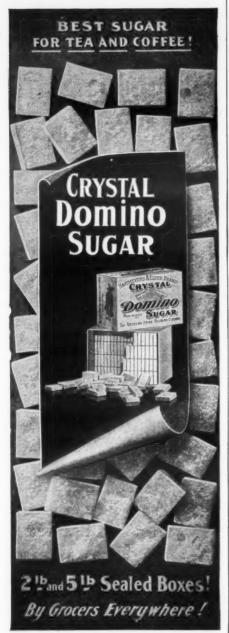
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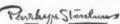
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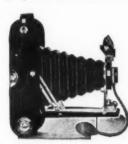
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This tale is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the living, breathing West, that the reader is likely to imagine that he himself is cantering over the grassy plains and imbibling the pure air of the prairie in company with Chip, Weary, Happy Jack and the other cowboys of the Flying U ranch. The story is a comedy, but there are dramatic touches in it that will hold the reader breathless. Pathos and humor are adroitly commingled and the author seems to be as adept at portraying one as the other. The "Little Doctor" makes a very lovable heroine, and one doesn't blame Chip in the least for falling in love with her. The book reviewer's task would be a pleasant one if all his work had to do with such wholesome and delightful stories as "Chip, of the Flying U." Beautifully illustrated in colors by Mr. Charles M. Russell, the greatest painter of cowboy life in America. Price, \$1.25. Sent postpaid by the publishers upon receipt of price.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York City

#### "Don't Envy a Good Complexion; Use POMPEIAN and Have One"

YOU will never know the reasons for Pompeian popularityhow clean you can be and look—how refreshed, healthy and wholesome in appearance—until you test Pompeian. Rub it on your moistened face, well into the pores; a few moments of mas-saging, and out comes the cream many shades darker than when applied. You are astonished-never suspected that so much dirt

was in the skin, despite soap-and-water scrubbing.

Glance in your mirror—the old sallow "dead skin" appearance has gone, and in place is a skin with the freshness and

smoothness of perfect health and youth.

"The Standard Face Cream"

"Don't envy a good complexion; use Pompeian and have one." If you wish to try before you buy, send 6c in coin or stamps for a trial jar. Or read poster-calendar offer below, and send 16c for trial jar and a copy of "Pompeian Beauty."

### Send for 1910 "Pompeian Beauty" Poster-Calendar

Our lavendar-and-gold 1910 Poster-Calendar panel is 3 feet high and 716 inches wide. The small reproduction of "Pompeian Beauty," as shown on the right, gives but a faint idea of the exquisite detail of color and costume. No advertising matter is printed on front of panel—just the artist's name-plate as you see it in the small reproduction herewith. 1910 Calendar is printed on rear to permit of artistic framing, but the panel effect obviates the accessity of framing. A loop at top permits easy hanging. This "Pompeian Beauty" girl will be the Poster-Calendar sensation of 1910. The supply is limited—send for one early enough to avoid disappointment. Write now before you lay this paper aside. Enclose 10c in coin or stamps. For 16c we will send a asuc. Enclose the in coin of stamps. For for we will send a trial jar of Pompeian Massage Cream, the standard face cream, and "Pompeian Beauty," 3 feet high and in lavender and gold. You may order either or both.

#### Pompeian for Men

READ WHAT USERS SAY:

Makes shaving a success.—Mr. J. H. M., Portland, Mc.
Makes your face clean and clear on the morning after.3—Mr. J. H. M., Nashus, N. H.,
Clears the skin like a month in the mountains. 3—Mr. D. R. F., Philadelphia, Pa,
Introduces you to your handsomer self. 3—Mr. L. L. G., Buffalo, N. Y.
A neck-care for the close shaver. 3—Mr. F. H. S., New York City.

The above lines are a few of the many thousands entered in a recent contest for the best lines describing the merits and benefits of Pompeian Massage Cream. Get Pompeian to-day at your druggist's or have it used at your barber's. Look for "Pompeian" on the jar. There are countless cheap, injurious imitations on which the barber makes more money—at your expense.

Pompeian rubs in and rolls out, cleansing the pores as even soap and water can not. 'The dead-skin "old-man" look departs with it. A TRIAL JAR sent for 6c in coin or stamps. Why not send 16c to-day for poster-

endar and trial jar? Read description above.
Sold by 50,000 dealers—used in 40,000 high-class barber shops

Dealers Everywhere; 50c, 75c and \$1

THE POMPEIAN MFG. CO., 34 Prospect Street, Cleveland, Ohio



SEE POSTER CALENDAR OFFER



**FOUR EXCELLENT HOTELS.** The only resort having **THREE GOLF COURSES**, all in pink of condition, Country Club, 40,000 Acre Private Shooting Preserve, Good Guides and Trained Dogs, Fine Livery of Saddle Horses, Model Dairy, Tennis Courts, Trap Shooting, etc.

NO CONSUMPTIVES RECEIVED AT PINEHURST

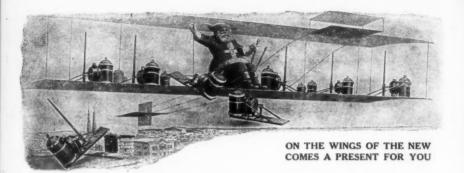
Through Pullman Service from New York to Pineburst via Seaboard Air Line. Only one night out from New York, Boston, Cleveland, Pittsburg and Cincinnati. Don't fail to send to nearest railroad offices for literature, illustrating the out-of-door features of PINEHURST and giving full details of attractions.

Send for illustrated literature and list of Golf, Tennis and Shooting Tournaments

Pinehurst General Office: PINEHURST, NORTH CAROLINA, or Leonard Tufts, Owner, Boston, Mass,







The rush of air through its wings upholds the aeroplane, but rushing air has been made to do greater service for man than this.

The application of air suction to household cleaning is a greater advance over our old laborious, inefficient ways of cleaning than is the flight of the aeroplane over our old methods of transportation.

Man is truly happy only as he progresses; for progress is the law of the universe.

Make for yourself a merry Christmas and a happy New Year by getting in line with progressive standards of cleanliness.

### The Ideal Vacuum Cleaner

#### Operated by It Eats Up the Dirt

or Electric Motor

What a splendid Christmas gift this truly wonderful machine would make for your wife, your young married daughter or some other loved one or friend! This is *the* machine that has brought all the tremendous advantage of Vacuum Cleaning within the *enery-day* reach of all.

#### IT COSTS ONLY \$25 COMPLETE

Weighing only 20 pounds, it is carried about as easily as a pail of water, and you work it by hand with an ease that makes the labor of cleaning seem like play.

Either this or, at a total cost of \$60 or \$65, you can enjoy the luxury of having your machine equipped with a first-class motor that is readily attached to any electric light socket.

Christmas is fast approaching. Don't put off getting this machine. Cut out this advertisement now. Act at once.

The Ideal Vacuum Cleaner is sold at our various agencies throughout the country. If no agency is handy, write us direct. Valuable booklet on Cleaning Problem sent free.

AMERICAN VACUUM CLEANER COMPANY, 225G Fifth Ave., New York City

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



# A Highway of Communication

It goes by your door. Every Home, every office, every factory, and every farm in the land is on that great highway or within reach of it. It is a highway of communication, and every Bell Telephone is a gateway by which it can be reached.

Millions of messages travel over this highway every day. In the great cities they follow one another like the bullets from a machine gun, and over the wide reaches of the country they fly with the speed of shooting stars.

The Bell service carries the thoughts and wishes of the people from room to room, from house to house, from community to community, and from state to state.

This service adds to the efficiency of each citizen, and multiplies the power of the whole nation.

The Bell system brings eighty million men, women and children into one telephone commonwealth, so that they may know one another and live together in harmonious understanding.

A hundred thousand Bell employees are working all the time on this highway of communication. Every year it is made longer and broader, and its numerous branches are more widely extended. Every year it is furnished with a larger number of telephone gateways and becomes the means of greater usefulness.

The Bell Long Distance Telephone will meet your new needs and serve your new purposes. It means — one policy, one system, universal service. Every Bell Telephone is the center of the System.

### AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES



Let this Christmas be the day that marks in your home the dawn of a new delight. For the children's sake, for the better entertainment of your guests, for the pleasure, the limitless recreation it holds for you and all who share its possession with you—replace your old-style piano (which as you know but few can play) with an ANGELUS Player-Piano, which everyone can play. Do this between now and Christmas and in so doing confer on your home the one ideal gift, the delights of which are never ending.



# PLAYER-PIANO

One of the reasons why the true music-lover always prefers the ANGELUS PLAYER-PIANO to any other is that only the ANGELUS instruments have

#### THE ARTISTYLE MUSIC ROLLS

which are to the person playing them the A. B. C. of music. On each ARTISTYLE ROLL, from the first note of the music to the last, is printed a system of expression characters which show just what notes to emphasize, what to subdue, what phrases to accelerate and where to retard. The markings on the ARTISTYLE ROLLS are so simple and so easily followed that to even the novice in playing them, a most musicianly rendition of any selection is assured.

The Artistyle Music Rolls are an advantage exclusive with the ANGELUS—as are also the wonderful Phrasing Leverthe invaluable Melodant and the Diaphragm Pneumatics. The complete Angelus line consists of the Angelus Player-Piano, the Knabe-Angelus, the Emerson-Angelus in the U.S.; the Gourlay-Angelus and Angelus Player-Piano in Canada.

Go to our nearest representative and have him demonstrate the ANGELUS instrument to you. Write us for his address and for the beautiful new ANGELUS book, free on request.

THE WILCOX & WHITE COMPANY,

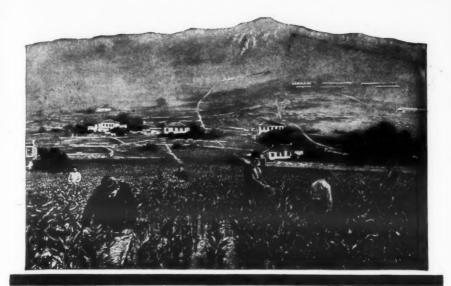
Business Established in 1877. MERIDEN, CONN.

REGENT HOUSE,

REGENT STREET,



OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST. "All rights secured."



# From the Foot of These Turkish Mountains

Comes the tobacco for Murads.

No other soil on all the earth grows leaves with an equal aroma.

The best of these leaves go to our buyers—men who live on the ground, and buy direct from the planters. Men who know where the rare leaves grow.

The leaves we refuse, when sold through merchants, cost as much as we pay for the leaves we select.

That's why many cigarettes which are vastly inferior cost the Murad price.

# MURAD

10 for 15 cents

CIGARETTES

S. ANARGYROS, New York



# PALL MALL FAMOUS CIGARETTES



and with it good cheer. Gifts? A suggestion:

100 PALL MALL, Regular Size 100 PALL MALL, Kind's Size one or both. Expressive of the finest taste, they cannot but be acceptable. Their cost is in proportion to a box of ten, which is—

"A Shilling in London A Quarter Here"